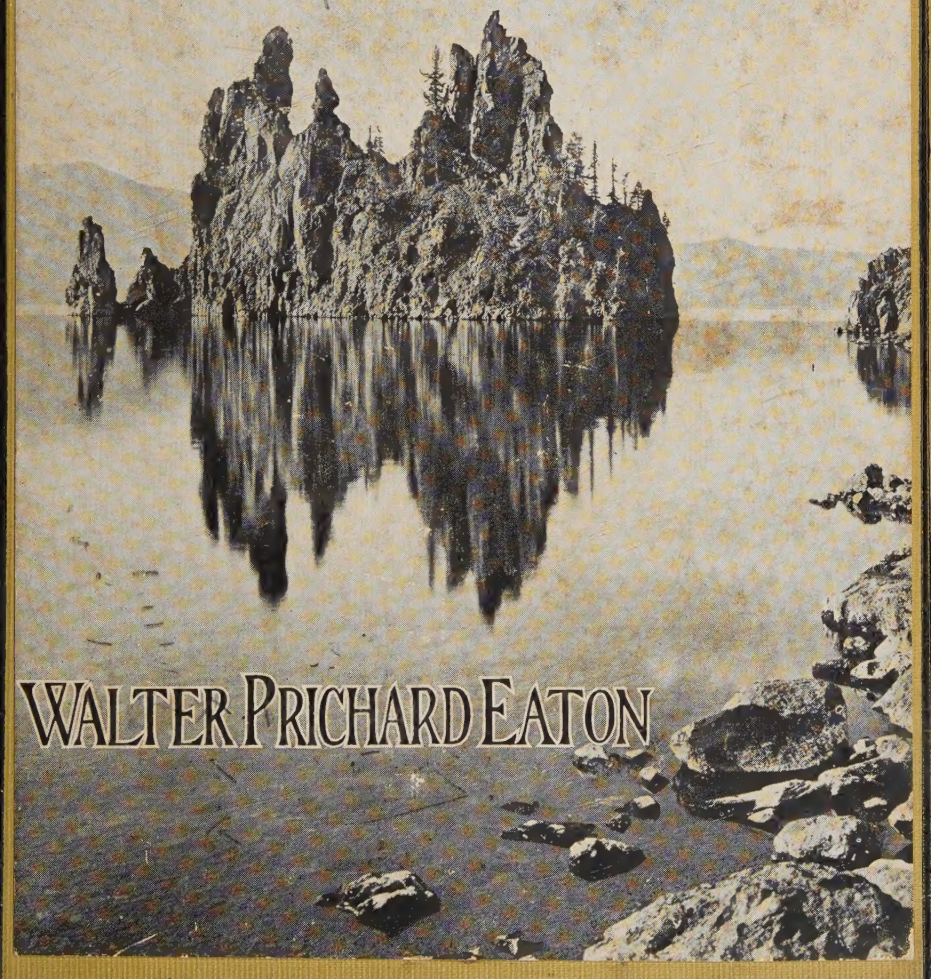
BOY SCOUTS AT CRATER LAKE



WALTER PRICHARD EATON

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Pack Train Descending to Hunt's Cove. Mount Jefferson in the Distance.

Boy Scouts at Crater Lake

A STORY OF CRATER LAKE NATIONAL PARK AND THE HIGH CASCADES

By
WALTER PRICHARD EATON

Illustrated with Photographs
FRED H. KISER



W. A. WILDE COMPANY
BOSTON CHICAGO

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BOY SCOUTS AT CRATER LAKE

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FOREWORD

(For Parents and Similar People)

IT seems to be generally assumed that a story for boys must be crowded full of adventures, and the assumption is doubtless based on experience. This would be all right if the adventures were also based on experience. Unfortunately, however, such is not always the case, and then the result is something that may possibly satisfy an immediate craving of the boy for excitement, but in the long run can only confuse his sense of reality. It is probably more important, in a boy's development, to clarify his sense of reality than it is to feed his imagination. His imagination, normally, needs very little prodding to carry him away from reality. That is why tales of actual adventure, such as the records of explorers, hunters, and the like, are so worth while for boys. They feed the imagination while, at the same time, keeping touch with the real. They have the lure of fiction, and the solidity of fact.

It has been my steady purpose, in the Boy Scout series of stories which I have written, to bear this in mind. I have not described places with which I was unfamiliar, nor created adventures it was impossible for boys to experience. In the volume preceding the present one, "Boy Scouts in Glacier Park," I endeavored to give some adequate idea of that beautiful National Park, and hence of a section of the Rocky

Mountain wilderness, and the actual adventures one may now encounter therein. Our friend, Bill Hart, of movie fame, may be relied on to supply the other sort of Wild West adventure, without any need of help from me. The response of my young readers was so pleasantly encouraging that I am asking them, in this book, to go still farther West, into another National Park, Crater Lake, and into the Cascade wilderness of Oregon. Whitman's ride for Oregon was long ago, and today they are building a macadam highway where his horse left a solitary track.

The Cascade Mountains afford numerous opportunities for snow climbing—and anyone who has practiced this noble sport does not need to be told that it supplies plenty of adventure. Snow mountains have a way of withdrawing themselves many miles from human habitation, and a pack train is scarcely to be afforded save by those who have reached years of comparative discretion, so I have no fear of sending youngsters out alone to start up the Roosevelt Glacier. If, however, I can inspire some few of them to persuade their fathers to take them into the high places, I know that both they and their fathers will ultimately thank me.

But chiefly, in the end, I want young America to know and to love and to preserve what is left of the American wilderness.

W. P. E.

Twin Fires,
Sheffield,
Massachusetts.

CONTENTS

I. Bennie Visits the Public Library and Gives Spider a Surprise 13

II. Bennie Takes the Rope Up His First Cliff . 19

III. How Bennie Earned a Trip to Oregon . . 31

IV. Bennie and Spider Cross the Continent . . 39

V. All Aboard for Crater Lake!—and Dumpling in the Other Car 50

VI. Bennie and Spider Have to Make After-dinner Speeches, and Bennie's Knees Knock . . 57

VII. Held Up by the Snow, with the Thermometer at 86° 68

VIII. Up the Rim of Crater Lake at Last, Through the Snow-drifts 75

IX. The Mountain That Fell Into Itself . . 83

X. Down the Rim to the Lake—The Boys Ski on a Crater Snow-drift in July 88

XI. Dumplin' Tests the Strength of a Snow Cornice on Garfield Peak 106

XII. Bennie Climbs the Mast of the Phantom Ship and Knows He Has Done Something . . 113

XIII. The Scouts Are Driven Ashore by a Storm and Have to Climb Llao Rock—and They Learn a Lesson 122

XIV. Bennie Takes a Day Off to Do a Good Turn—He Washes All the Dirty Clothes . . 137

XV. The Long Hike—The Scouts Find Packing Grub and Blanket Rolls Up and Down Cliffs is Hard Work 144

XVI. The Climb Up Scott Peak—Bennie Begins Work for a Merit Badge for Hiking . . 154

XVII. Good-bye to Crater Lake, and a Motor Trip to Bend 167

XVIII. The Boys Encounter "Pep," Who Promises Them a Bear Hunt 174

XIX. The Bear Hunt—In Which the Boys Discover that the Bear Doesn't Do All the Hard Work 178

XX. Bennie Achieves a Dog, and the Party Puts Out a Forest Fire 206

XXI. The Pack Train Has to Toboggan Into Hunt's Cove, and Bennie Puts "Action" Into It . 221

XXII. The First Attempt at Jefferson—Dumplin' Almost Falls to Death—The Hardest Work the Boys Ever Did 234

XXIII. The Summit is Conquered! 262

XXIV. Back Over the Divide—A Horse Turns Three Somersaults Down the Snow Slope . . 273

XXV. Bennie Loses Jeff, but Brings Home Something Else to Last Him Many Years . . . 280

ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

Pack Train Descending to Hunt's Cove. Mount Jefferson in the Distance. (*Frontispiece*) . . . 222

Crater Lake—Wizard Island, and Over it Llao Rock . 80

Campers at the Rim of Crater Lake. Mid-July Snow in Foreground 88

The Boys Sliding Down Wizard Island Crater (Enlarged from a Movie) 98

The Boys Walking on the Snow Cornice of Garfield Peak (Enlarged from a Movie) 108

Looking Across Hunt's Cove to Jefferson. Dotted Line Shows Route of Climb; Arrow Points to Place Where Dumplin' Slipped 252

Crossing the Divide Near Mount Jefferson, on July 25th. Three Fingered Jack in Distance . . 274

Saint Peter's Dome and Columbia River. Mount Adams in Far Distance 286

Boy Scouts at Crater Lake

CHAPTER I

Bennie Visits the Public Library and Gives Spider a Surprise

BENNIE CAPEN was sitting in the public library reading a book. Miss Lizzie Cox, the librarian, was watching him with some suspicion. Bennie was not what you might call one of her regular customers, and she was surprised to see him come in, ask for a certain book, and take it off to the reading table. She certainly watched him as if she suspected a nigger in the wood-pile somewhere. Bennie had a reputation in Southmead, but it wasn't exactly a reputation for bookishness. Some people said he was a "bad boy," some people laughed and said he was "full o' pep," and some people, including Mr. Rogers, the scout master of Bennie's troop, said the trouble with Bennie was that his engine was too powerful for the chassis. Anyway, Miss Lizzie Cox, behind the delivery desk, frowned as she watched him through her gold-rimmed glasses, as if she expected to see him throw the book at little Bob Walters, across the table, or pull the hair of Lucy Smith, who was consulting the encyclopædia

preparatory to writing a composition on "The Products of the Philippine Islands."

However, Bennie did none of these things. He read steadily in his book, after first looking at all the pictures, and emitting several low whistles, each one of which brought a sharp, admonitory rap of her pencil on the desk from Miss Cox, and a loud "Silence!" Bennie grinned cheerfully each time, and went on reading and looking at the pictures. His eyes were bright, and every now and then he ran his fingers excitedly through his brown hair, till it stood straight up on his forehead.

By and by little Bob Walters returned the bound volume of St. Nicholas and went out. Lucy Smith exhausted the products of the Philippine Islands (or her own patience), and took refuge in "Vogue." From the streets outside came the shouts of a snowball fight. But Bennie kept on reading. Finally the door opened, and another scout came in, a tall, slender boy with two books under his arm. He saw Bennie as he was walking up to the desk, and stopped, surprised. Then he stole over on tiptoe, and looked over Bennie's shoulder at the book.

"Gosh all hemlock, Bennie," he whispered, "plugging to get a hundred per cent in physical geography? You don't care how much of a shock you give your dear teacher, do you?"

Bennie looked up, with his usual grin. "'Lo, Spider," he said. "Say, this old book is some humdinger, I'll tell the world."

"Don't tell the world so loud, or Miss Cox'll be out

over the desk," Bob Chandler whispered back, catching a sight of the librarian's face out of a corner of his eye. "What is the book?"

Bennie turned back to the title page, and Spider read, "On British Crags and Alpine Heights."

"Say, wait a minute—look at this picture," said Bennie, turning the pages to find it. "Here it is. Look at that old cliff! And pipe where that guy is climbing. Oh, boy! That's only one, too. 'Most every picture's like that, or more exciting, and it tells how somebody fell off most of 'em, and was killed, and ——"

"Silence!" from Miss Lizzie Cox.

"Old crab!" whispered Bennie. "Well, I gotter finish this chapter 'fore closing time."

"Why don't you take the book out? I'd like to read it, too," Spider whispered.

"Haven't got a card," Bennie confessed. "Guess I don't read as much as I ought to."

"Guess you don't," said Spider. "Here, give it to me. I'll take it out for you."

"How'd you ever know about it, anyhow?" he asked, when they were outside the building, on the snowy sidewalk. "Gave me some shock to see you sitting in the library!"

"Mr. Rogers told me about it," Bennie answered. "We got to talking about mountains, and climbing, and he said to go ask for this book and see what real climbing is like. Oh, boy! I wish we had something like those old what d'you call 'ems—spitzes—around these diggings."

"A spitz being what?" Spider laughed.

"Here, give me the book—I'll show you. It's a German word, I guess—means spire, maybe—I don't know. Never studied Dutch—probably wouldn't know if I had—but anyhow they're tall, sharp rocky peaks, pretty nearly straight up, in the Alps somewhere, and you climb 'em with your teeth and your toe-nails."

The two scouts paused in the middle of the sidewalk, while Bennie hunted out a picture of several men, roped together, climbing the precipitous face of one of the Dolomites, and their faces were over the book, looking at the thrilling photograph—when, *blam,* came a snowball, crashing into Bennie's side.

He thrust the book into Spider's hands for safekeeping, stooped for a handful of snow, and dashed around the corner of the post-office after the vanishing pair of heels.

When he came back he was grinning. "Fresh guy, that Tenderfoot," he said. "His ma won't need to wash his face for supper tonight. Come on, let's go to my house and look at those old pictures some more."

They were soon curled up on the couch in his father's library, with the book first on one lap and then on the other. After they had looked twice at every picture, they read aloud to each other parts of the text, especially the most exciting parts they could find, but skipping the descriptions of scenery and the long foreign names. The Welsh names were worse than the German.

What interested them most, however, were the pictures that showed how the rope is used, both in climbing and descending, and the passages about it.

"I wish we had a braided rope!" Spider exclaimed.

"Guess we could get some sort of a rope, all right," said Bennie. "But where are we going to get the—the spitzes to use it on? Those old mountains make ours look like pimples."

"Oh, they're not so bad—they're *something,* anyway," Spider answered. "I bet you'd need a rope to climb the cliffs on Monument Mountain, and maybe, if the snow gets deep, we'd have to cut steps in it to get up to those cliffs. Might try it."

"Sure, we could try it. But you wouldn't slide far enough to hurt yourself if you did slip going up to the cliffs, and I bet *nobody* could climb right up the cliffs themselves."

"I bet the man who wrote this book could," said Spider. "We never really tried it. What do you say if we get a rope and have a go at 'em, next Saturday, eh?"

"You're on!" cried Bennie. "We'll get the old rope tomorrow, after school. Going to take the troop along?"

"Not on your life! We'll ask Mr. Rogers, though. We don't want too many. Those cliffs aren't going to be a picnic, I'll tell the town."

"You've said it," Bennie assented. "Well, so long till tomorrow. Don't forget to bring some money for that old rope."

"And don't you forget that book's out on my card,"

Spider laughed. "Won't do it any good if you throw it at the cat."

Bennie made as if to throw it at him, and he ducked quickly out of the door.

CHAPTER II

Bennie Takes the Rope Up His First Cliff

THE next afternoon the two scouts emerged from Seymour's store with a hundred feet of brand new half-inch rope, and ran directly into a group of half a dozen of their fellow scouts.

"Hi! Get on to Spider and Bennie!" someone cried. "What you goin' to do, Bennie, rope a steer?"

"Goin' to hang yourselves?" somebody else demanded.

"Goin' to tie up the cat?" came from a third.

"Going to have some spaghetti for supper?" said a fourth.

"Goin' to fish for minnows through the ice with it?" asked still another.

"No, we're goin' to tie up a pound of candy for our dear teacher," Bennie replied. "Come on, Spider, these guys are too bright for us."

"Don't trip over your skipping rope, dearie," taunted one of the scouts. Bennie hurled a snowball at him and then he and Spider dodged away from a shower of pursuing missiles.

"Well, they didn't learn much that time," Spider laughed, as they entered Bennie's back yard, went into the barn, and threw an end of the rope over a rafter, so that both ends dangled to the floor.

"Now we'll try coming down the doubled rope," said Bennie.

He climbed out on the rafter, grasped both strands of the rope, and slid down. Spider followed him.

At the bottom they surveyed their bare palms ruefully.

"Feels as if it was full of splinters," said Bennie.

"It's too stiff—it's like a piece o' wood," Spider complained. "Guess it isn't much like the braided ropes Alpine climbers use. What are we going to do about it?"

"Ask Mr. Rogers," said Bennie. "We haven't told him about it yet, anyhow. Come on. Wait a minute, though. No use getting any more questions fired at us."

He took one end of the rope and pulled the other end down over the beam. Then, while Spider played it out, he spun around and wound it around his body. After that, he put on his mackinaw.

"You look 's if you weighed about two hundred," Spider laughed.

"I feel like Houdini," said Bennie.

They found the scout master at home, and told him their plans, and about the rope. He laughed, and grabbing the loose end, spun Bennie around like a top, while he unwound it.

"The first thing to do is to wrap a piece of twine around both ends, so it won't unravel," he said, "and then boil it for a day in your mother's wash boiler—if she'll let you."

"Will you go with us Saturday?"

"Sure thing. But let's take a couple more of the troop along. Not a lot. It may be dangerous. We'll take Billy Vance and Tom Shields, eh? They are strong and careful."

"Well, not any more," said Bennie. "Gee whiz, we don't want to let 'em all in on this right off the bat."

"What kind of a scout are you?" Mr. Rogers asked. "Want to hog all the fun?"

Bennie reddened. "No, it isn't that," he said, "but me and Spider sort of discovered this, and we want to try it out first. A lot of 'em would only laugh. I got it out of a book."

"Ho, that's it!" laughed the scout master. "You don't want to be caught reading a book! Well, I've a good mind to assemble the whole troop, and tell 'em the glad news. Cheer up, though, I won't. The shock might be bad for 'em."

"He's got your number," said Spider, as the two scouts left.

Bennie grinned, but he looked a little sheepish.

It took a lot of explaining before Mrs. Capen would let the boys have the wash boiler, but finally they persuaded her, and slipped the coil of rope into the water, leaving it there all night to boil.

The next day the water was a dark brown color, but the rope, after they took it out and stretched it as hard as they could from the barn around a tree and back again, dried out much softer than it had been, so that it could be easily handled. And, to complete

their happiness, that night it began to snow again heavily.

"I hope it don't stop till Saturday, and there's six feet on the level!" cried Bennie.

There weren't six feet, but there were more than two, badly drifted, when Saturday dawned bright and clear. When Mr. Rogers and the four scouts set out for the cliffs, two miles away, they were on snowshoes. Bennie carried the rope, carefully coiled, over his shoulder, and he had a scout hatchet in his belt, to cut steps with. Each member of the party had an alpenstock, also, some of them made by taking the guard off old ski poles, some merely by sharpening a five foot length of pole. The snow was deep, but it was also fine and powdery, so that even on snowshoes they sank well in, and had to take turns breaking trail.

"It doesn't look to me as if we'd have to cut many steps," said the scout master.

And it turned out that they didn't, much to Bennie's disgust. To reach the base of the cliffs, it was necessary to climb for 300 yards or more up a pile of rocks, of all sizes and shapes, which in ages past had been broken off from the precipice above, and now lay in a vast heap at the base, making a kind of wild, irregular stairway, and just about as steep as a flight of steps. Bennie had hoped that these rocks would be packed over hard with snow, so they would need to cut steps up the slope. But, alas! it takes far deeper snows, and snows that do not melt in spring, to form such a slope.

What they found, instead, was that the snow had filled in between the rocks just enough so you couldn't tell whether your foot was going to sink six inches or six feet, and blown off the top of the rocks, making them slippery as glass. Of course, they had to leave their snowshoes at the base. To get up the pile meant nothing more than hard work and scraped shins. Billy and Tom, the two other scouts who had come along, began to complain.

"Say, is this your idea of fun?" said Tom. "You don't need a rope for this, you need shin guards."

"Yeah, where'd you get this Alpine stuff, anyhow?" said Billy, as one foot went down between two hidden stones and he half disappeared from sight.

"You wait till we get to the old cliff up there!" Bennie answered hopefully.

The party paused and took a look at the cliff wall, now towering just above them. They had all climbed the mountain many times by the path, but none of them, not even Mr. Rogers, had ever tackled the cliff face. It was 200 feet high, most of it a sheer precipice, and nobody in town had ever dreamed of trying to climb it.

"Gosh!" Tom exclaimed. "We can't climb *that!*"

"Well, we're going to try," Bennie replied. "It's not a patch on a lot in that book, is it, Spider?"

"You've said it," Spider answered.

After a few minutes more of hard scrambling, they stood directly under the face of the precipice. Being straight up, it was quite bare of snow, except on a

few ledges here and there, and at this point nobody could have climbed it. There was nothing to get even a finger hold on.

"Well, go on up with your rope, and throw us down an end," Tom taunted.

"We'll have to work around till we can find a chimney, won't we?" Bennie asked the scout master.

"Or a ladder," Billy added.

They moved along under the beetling face of the rock, going in up to their waists in the snow which had drifted against the base, until they came to a sort of gully which divided the main cliff from an out-thrown spur like a bowsprit. This gully was very steep, about sixty-five degrees, and was partly filled with snow. A few laurel bushes grew in it here and there, and it evidently led up to a ledge, because at the top a little pine tree was growing, a hundred feet above their heads.

"If we can get up anywhere, it's here," the scout master announced.

Bennie uncoiled the rope and fastened one end around his waist, so his hands would be free. Then he started up the gully. There was no question of cutting steps—the snow was too soft. All he could do was to tread it down under his feet and trust to its holding him without sliding down until he could reach up to a laurel bush and pull himself a bit higher. Twice he slid back. Once his mittens slipped on a bush, and he came down ten feet before he could get a hold on something. Then he took his mittens off, and climbed bare handed. Those below heard him

give a yell of triumph just as the last of the rope was apparently going up after him, and then they saw him come out on the ledge and tie his end of the rope around the pine tree.

"Come on!" he called. "All fast! Wow, but my hands are cold!"

The others came up easily enough, for they had the rope to pull on, and soon they were all standing on the tiny ledge, a hundred feet above the base of the cliff.

"Well, Tom, the old rope was some help, eh?" Bennie demanded.

"Where do we go from here?" was Tom's reply.

"Yes, where do we go?" the scout master laughed.

"Right over to the next ledge," said Bennie, pointing to another ledge, on the same level, about ten feet away, with next to nothing but bare cliff between.

"Oh, do we!" said Billy.

"Sure," Bennie replied. "This is a traverse. That's what you call 'em, isn't it, Mr. Rogers?"

"Sure, it's a traverse all right. I don't like the looks of it, either."

"Same here," said Tom. "Gosh, if you slipped getting over there—good night!"

He looked down the sheer hundred foot drop, and pulled back quickly.

But Bennie already had the rope pulled up, and one end around his body, under his arms, again.

"Here, Mr. Rogers," he said, giving the scout master the coil. "You take a brace and play me out. I'll get the rope over to the other ledge, and tie one end there, and then you can put it 'round the tree,

and throw me the other end. Then you'll all have a railing to cross with."

Mr. Rogers looked worried. "Now, go slow and watch your step, Bennie," he cautioned. "Here, Spider, take hold of this rope behind me, so two of us'll have a grip."

Bennie took off his mittens again, and beat the snow from the crevices of the rock ahead of him till he could get a good grip with his fingers. Then he shoved his feet out on the tiny ledge below, hardly six inches wide, and slowly, cautiously, made his way toward the other landing. He had only ten feet to go, but in the cold, without gloves, and with the rocks slippery from snow, it was painful work, and he wasn't sure if his fingers would stand it without letting go, they soon pained him so. Mr. Rogers watched him anxiously, as he played out the rope. The others held their breaths.

But he got there, and a shout went up from everybody. He blew on his fingers and then tied his end of the rope around a tree on the new ledge, while the scout master passed the other end around the first tree, and then threw the end across. When that end, too, was tied, a double rope stretched across the gap between the ledges, and the rest could put it under an armpit, hold it fast with one hand while they grabbed the cracks of rock with the other, and come over in perfect safety. Then they pulled the rope over to them, and started on.

"Some traverse!" Bennie cried. "I thought once I'd have to let go, though, my fingers got so cold."

"Summer's the time for this sort of work," said the scout master.

Billy, who had said nothing for several minutes, looked back at the traverse, and down into the drop of space below.

"I was scared pink," he said, "and I don't care who knows it."

"I wasn't scared, 'cause I knew Mr. Rogers and Spider would hold me," said Bennie. "Still, I'd have gone a ways at that, and kind of dangled."

The new ledge led around a corner, and then upward for twenty feet, and brought them to a pile of jagged rocks which could be climbed without a rope, by brushing off the snow, till they were only twenty feet below the top of the cliff. Here there was only one way up. By grabbing any little handholds they could find, it was possible to climb up about a dozen feet to a tiny ledge, one at a time, and get into a narrow upright crack, about two feet wide. This crack led right to the summit, and you could work up it by pushing with your feet and hands on one side and your back on the other. At least, that is what Bennie declared.

"It's a chimney!" he cried.

"Well, I wish there was a fire at the bottom of it," sighed Tom, hitting his hands together.

Bennie started to tie the rope under his arms, but Spider grabbed it.

"Say, whose card did you take that book out on?" he said. "My turn now."

After considerable feeling around for toe-holds,

Spider got to the ledge, and into the chimney. When he stood erect, the top was only a few feet over his head, so he soon had his fingers above the rim, and pulled himself out and vanished. A moment later they heard his "All fast!" and with the rope to climb with, the rest were speedily beside him on the snow-covered summit of the mountain.

Everybody gave a shout as the prospect burst on them—the 200 foot drop at their feet to the bottom of the cliff, and then the long steep slope below, and then the valley farms and roads, all lying under a dazzling carpet of white, and the far-off village and still farther away more blue mountains.

"I was never on a mountain in winter," said Spider. "Gee, it's great!"

"You've said it!" cried Tom and Billy.

Bennie didn't speak for a moment.

"Say, it sort of makes a feller feel queer," he said, finally. "I mean, all this bigness!"

"It's the altitude, Bennie," Tom remarked. "Goes to people's heads, sometimes."

"Shut up," Bennie retorted, good-naturedly. "Just the same, I know now why men go bugs on mountain climbing."

The descent was more rapid, and even more exciting, than the climb. They used the doubled rope, pulling it down to them after they had made a fifty foot descent (the rope was a hundred feet long), and speedily reaching the traverse.

Here Bennie and Spider offered to let either Tom or Billy carry the rope across to make the railing, but

both of them said, "Not on your life!" in one voice, and most decidedly. So Spider took it across, and when everybody was over, Bennie tied one end around the tree, tossed the rope down the gully the full hundred feet, and told the rest to slide down it.

"How you going to get down?" Tom asked.

"You'll see."

When the last man was down, Bennie doubled the rope around the tree, and slid on the two strands till he reached a laurel bush in the gully. There he hung on, pulled his rope down, slipped it around the bush, and came the rest of the way, in a shower of snow.

Fifteen minutes later they were down again at their snowshoes, and as they put them on and tramped out across the fields away from the mountain they looked back up at the cliffs, rising sheer and naked toward the blue sky.

"Doesn't seem as if we could have got up there, does it?" Bennie cried.

"Now it's all over, seems as if it was great sport," Billy laughed. "But while you're doing it—say, I wasn't thinking of much but keeping hold of that old rope!"

"That's a very good thing to think of, too," said the scout master. "Boys, I want you to promise me one thing, on your honor as scouts. That's dangerous work, especially at this time of year. I want you to promise me you won't try to take any of the other, smaller boys up there. We don't want any nasty accident in our troop. Will you?"

"We promise," they all said, soberly.

"Wow! I'd like to go to the Alps!" Bennie burst out, a moment later. "Say, Spider, let's you an' me go climb one of those spitzes."

"All right," said Spider. "We'll start to-morrow."

"Just the same," Bennie added, seriously, "I'm going to climb a *real* mountain some day, if it takes a leg."

"It'll take two of 'em, not to mention two hands, a strong back and a good head," Mr. Rogers laughed.

"A good head, did you hear that, Bennie?" said Tom.

Bennie answered with a handful of snow.

CHAPTER III

How Bennie Earned a Trip to Oregon

AT dinner that night Bennie was so full of his adventure on Monument that he described it to his father and mother in minute detail.

"Good gracious, Bennie! don't you ever *dare* to do such a thing again!" his mother cried. "I don't see what Mr. Rogers is thinking of to take the scouts up such a place," she added to her husband.

"Guess Rogers knows his way around," Mr. Capen answered. "A boy's got to have a certain amount of excitement to keep him out of mischief."

"Sure!" said Bennie. "You've said a mouthful!"

"Bennie!" his mother cut in sharply. "I won't have you talking that way at my table, and to your own father."

"Aw, Ma, it's just slang—what's the harm?"

"One harm is, that it doesn't show proper respect for your father," she answered.

"Sorry," said Bennie. "Gee, I respect Pa all right. And say, Pa, can't I go somewhere this summer vacation where there are *real* mountains? Gee, I want to climb a *real* mountain! Will you let me go out to Oregon and see Uncle Bill?"

Mr. Capen didn't answer for a moment. Finally he laid down his knife and fork, looked sharply at his son, and replied, "Why should I?"

"Well, why shouldn't you?" was all Bennie could think of at first. Then he added, "Uncle Bill said he'd take me on a trip in Oregon some time, if we'd come out there, and a feller ought to see his own country. Everybody says that—see America first. Guess it's the best way there is to study geography and history and—and things."

"H'm," said his father slowly. Then again, "H'm. Well, young man, do you know what you are asking? Do you know what it costs to get to Oregon and back? It costs a lot of money, I can tell you, and if you went, your mother and I would have to stay at home while I earned it, so you'd have to travel alone."

"Let him go across the continent alone?" exclaimed Mrs. Capen. "I guess not!"

"Oh, gosh, you'd think I was a baby," Bennie protested.

"No, we don't think you are a baby," his father answered, "but we do think you are unreliable, and that you don't do your school work faithfully, and you don't do the things we ask you to do around the place. How about that dead apple tree you were going to cut up this week?"

"Oh, gee! I forgot it," Bennie said.

"Exactly. You forgot it. You evidently forgot to study your history and your Latin, this week, too, I gather from what the principal told me to-day. Now, when you act this way, all I say is, why should I let you go to Oregon, or anywhere else? What have you done to show me that you'll make real use of your opportunities? Your friend Bob Chandler, now, I'd

trust. He'd keep his eyes open and learn a lot, because he learns every day at home."

Bennie hung his head. Then he looked up at his father.

"Say, Pa, if I get good marks all the rest of the year, and if I come to the bank every Saturday morning and help you, and if I prune all the apple trees, may I go to Oregon?"

"How do you know your Uncle Billy wants you?" his mother demanded.

"I bet I can fix *that* all right. Say, Pa, can I?"

"You get the good marks for a month, son, and work on the apple trees, and come to the bank—and at the end of the month we'll see," his father answered.

"Gee, that's easy!" Bennie shouted.

After dinner he started to call up Spider and suggest going to the movies. He got as far as the telephone, in fact, and then hesitated. It was a hard fight for a minute, but he won out. Slowly he turned away from the 'phone, walked up to his own room, got out his textbooks, and began to study.

His father was watching him, from the library. When he had gone upstairs, Mr. Capen laughed.

"The boy's gone to study," he said to his wife. "It took a mountain to make him!"

During the next month Bennie had more than one battle with himself, and he didn't always win out, either. But, on the whole, he did better than his father had ever dreamed he would. Spider helped him, too. Bennie had told nobody but Spider the reason for his reformation, and he had added a hope that

maybe his uncle would suggest that he bring Spider along. Spider's father owned the largest store in town, and Spider thought that if he promised to work in it spare hours that spring and the next winter, his father would let him go.

"'Sides," Bennie said, "if you should go, Ma and Pa would let me, I bet, 'cause they think you're what they call 'responsible.' So you just *got* to help me stick at these old books."

Spider was a natural student. He liked to study, and it came easy to him. So day after day he made Bennie come over to his house after supper, and studied with him. When Bennie tried to talk, he said, "Shut up!" After a couple of weeks, Bennie began to make the discovery that the only way to get a lesson learned, or any job done, is to go right ahead and do it. He set himself a regular hour every day to prune in the apple orchard, and he studied hard in the school periods, and in the evenings. At the end of the month, his father called him into the library.

"Well, son," he said, "you've certainly bucked up. Your report card here doesn't look natural. Neither does the orchard."

"Can I write to Uncle Bill now?" Bennie grinned.

"Not yet," said his father. "You're doing fine, but this is only one month. I've got to see if you can keep the habit. If you do as well next month, you may write."

"Easy," said Bennie.

He didn't really mean that "easy," but as a matter of fact, it was much easier than it had been the first

month. He *was* getting the habit. Before the second month was over, Tom had called him "teacher's pet," and been knocked into a slushy snow-drift and had his neck stuffed with snow.

"I'll teacher's pet you!" Bennie laughed, finally letting him up.

At the end of the second month Mr. Capen told him he could write to his uncle, and if his uncle would let him come to Oregon and take him on one of his mountain trips, Bennie could go—"providing, of course, you pass all your examinations in June," his father added. "It's up to you."

"I'll pass all right!" Bennie said, joyfully. "And say, Pa, if Spider's father'll let him go, do you suppose Uncle Bill would mind if he went with me? Gee, it would be great to have old Spider along!"

"I'm sure Uncle Billy wouldn't mind, and I know your mother would feel a lot easier about your going," Mr. Capen said. "I'll see Spider's father today."

"Golly, you're some dad!" cried Bennie.

"Well, I feel I've got more of a son than I had two months ago," said Mr. Capen.

Bennie hadn't seen his Uncle Bill (a younger brother of his mother's) for three or four years. He lived in Portland, Oregon, where he was a very successful doctor, and every summer he took a vacation in the mountains, to get himself fit for his winter grind. Bennie remembered him as a tall, strong, good-natured man, who always came to see Mrs. Capen on his rare trips East, and always talked to Bennie about what fun it would be to show him "a real country"—meaning

Oregon. Bennie liked him, but it was hard, at that, to sit down in cold blood and invite yourself for a visit, and, still worse, to invite somebody else to go with you! Bennie began, and tore up, two or three letters before he got one that he thought would do. This is what he sent:

DEAR UNCLE BILL:

The last time you were East you pulled a lot of talk about showing me "a real country." I guess you never thought I could get that far to see it, so you were safe. But I've been plugging hard this winter and got such high marks that Pa thought I was sick and Ma sent for the doctor, and he says I need a change or I'll know too much. So I'm all ready to be shown that country of yours. And there's a chum of mine here, an awful good scout, Bob Chandler (Spider, we call him), who doesn't believe Oregon is so much, either, and he'd go along, too, if you asked him real polite. Besides, if he came, Ma would let me come. Ma thinks if I go alone a Pullman porter will think I'm a dress suitcase and pull me off the train at Omaha, or something. And I guess it's kind of fresh my suggesting this about Spider's going, but he's an awful good scout, and he and I have been climbing Monument Mountain on a rope. Shall I bring my rope? It is 100 feet long, and we boiled it on the stove so it is soft. If we do come what clothes shall we bring?

Your loving nephew,

BENNIE.

P. S.—Mother and Father are both well and send their love. B.

The chances are that before this letter was sent, Bennie's mother had written to her brother. But if

she did, Bennie didn't know it. He mailed his letter, and counted the days it would take to reach Portland. In twice that time he ought to have an answer. At the end of the week he and Spider were haunting the post-office.

Then, one day, the answer came. Bennie tore it open, and this is what he read:

DEAR BENNIE:

I start for Crater Lake and the Sky Line Trail on July 1st, leaving Portland by motor. I am a plain, rough man, but I might be improved by your learned society, and our scenery would be honored by your inspection. By all means bring Spider. Spiders are very useful in camp, to cook the bacon in. You'd better come two or three days ahead of the start, so I can look over your outfit. Bring your scout axes, canteens, flannel shirts, khaki breeches, leggings, and things like that. Boots are the most important item—very heavy, and water-proof. You can get good ones here. Bring snow goggles if you have them. Save your rope. I have one, though it isn't boiled like yours. I always fry my ropes. I'll write to you later about trains, and more about your equipment. Tell your mother that she is going to have a nice, quiet summer.

Your humble uncle,
WILLIAM WARREN.

Bennie read this letter aloud to Spider, and they both emitted a whoop of joy.

"Some bird, old Uncle Bill!" cried Bennie. "Always fries his ropes! I bet he's got a real Alpine rope —braided and everything. Gee, I'll bet we climb a

real humdinger of a mountain. Maybe Mount Hood! Oh, boy!"

"Say, I'd work every afternoon in the store for the rest of my life, to climb old Hood!" said Spider. "Come on, let's go look up how high Mount Hood is."

"I've looked it up—it's 11,225 feet," said Bennie.

"And Monument is 1,600," Spider reflected. "More'n 9,000 feet taller than Monument! Wow!"

"It's going to be a long time till June," said Bennie.

CHAPTER IV

Bennie and Spider Cross the Continent

IT certainly did seem a long while to both the scouts between the time of getting Uncle Bill's letter and the closing of school in June. But it was a pretty busy time, too. Bennie had to keep on studying, so he could make sure of passing his examinations, and Spider had to put in an hour or two every day in his father's store. Beside that, they had to have another go at the Monument Mountain cliffs as soon as the snow was gone in the spring, and at about every other rock, big or little, within tramping radius of home. They took the rest of the scouts along on these expeditions, but as nobody but Bennie and Spider were going to Oregon, the others didn't get so excited about climbing as they did, and soon everybody was playing baseball, leaving Bennie and Spider to practice rock scaling alone.

June came at last, and so did examinations. Bennie passed them easily, for the first time in his life—just because he had got his work from day to day. Then the time came to buy their railroad tickets and get their berths reserved. Before they knew it, their trunks were packed, and they were ready to start on the long journey.

Bennie noticed that his mother didn't say very much the night before, but just sat and looked at him, while

he was going over the tickets with his father, and folding them into a new pocketbook, with $100 in new bills, which Mr. Capen had brought home from the bank. Bennie put the purse into an inside pocket, and went over to his mother.

"Gee, Ma," he said, "you'd think I was going to the North Pole or somewhere, instead of just to visit Uncle Bill. Nobody's going to speak cross to your little Bennie, or make him take any wooden money, or hit him over the bean. Don't you worry. I guess me 'n' Spider can take a railroad trip without anybody needing to worry."

But though he spoke with a laugh, Bennie didn't feel very much like laughing, because when his mother looked at him, and tried to smile, he saw the tears behind her eyes, and he knew, somehow, that it wasn't because she was afraid for him, but because he was going to be away from her so long. He couldn't quite understand this, but he loved his mother tremendously, and it made him want to weep, too. In about one minute he *was* weeping, and so was his mother, with an arm about his shoulder.

Mr. Capen looked up in surprise.

"Hello!" he said. "Hello! So you don't want to go, eh?"

Bennie straightened up, and gulped hard, trying to swallow his sob in a grin.

"Where—where do you get that stuff?" he demanded.

"Well, you don't seem very *cheerful* about going."

"It was 'cause Ma wasn't cheerful," said Bennie.

"I'm cheerful, dear," said his mother, smiling at him. "I wasn't crying because I was sad, but just because—because—well, you won't understand, but because you're so big and grown up now, and can go away by yourself."

"Well, I don't see's that's anything to cry about, for a fact," said Bennie.

"Bennie," his father remarked, "you have never been a mother."

"You said a mouth ——"

"Bennie! slang, to your father!" said his mother.

"You have uttered a truthful remark, sir," grinned Bennie.

The next day Mr. and Mrs. Capen and Spider's father and mother came down to the depot with the two scouts. Half a dozen of their troop were there, too, and the last thing they heard as they waved from the car window, was the scout yell. The last thing Bennie saw was his mother's face. She was smiling bravely at him, and keeping the tears back.

In about an hour the boys had to change to a through train, which took them to Chicago. At Chicago they would have to spend the afternoon and early evening, and then take the Northwest Limited on the Union Pacific, which took them right to Portland, Oregon. They had their tickets in their pockets, and their berth checks, and about once in fifteen minutes they felt of themselves, to see if the precious pocketbooks were still there.

Neither Bennie nor Spider had ever been West before, and as long as daylight lasted they sat close to the

window. But it was dark all too soon. When the train entered Syracuse, and traveled, apparently, right down the main street, the two scouts looked right into the lighted shop-windows, but out in the country they saw nothing. So they went to bed, each with his precious pocketbook under his pillow.

They were up at daylight, and dressed long before the other passengers began to come into the washroom. Now they saw the Great Lakes beside the track, like the ocean, and rolled through the smoke of Gary, where the great steel mills are, and saw Lake Michigan, and almost before they knew it, were in Chicago.

The boys had careful directions what they were to do in Chicago. They were to get right aboard the transfer 'bus and ride over to the Northwestern station, checking their suitcases there. Then they could walk around the city, if they liked. It is a queer sensation to arrive in a great city which you have never seen before. Bennie and Spider, after the 'bus had rolled them quickly across the bridge to the other station, and they had checked their bags, walked out into the street, without any idea where they were, and turned east to see the town. They recrossed the bridge, walked a few blocks, and were suddenly in the Loop. The streets were none too wide. The elevated railroad roared and thundered overhead. The great buildings towered into the air. Trolleys, motors, thousands of people crowded the way from wall to wall.

"Some burg!" Bennie exclaimed. "Little old New York hasn't got much on this village. I didn't know Chicago was so big."

"Guess we haven't got everything in the East," Spider answered.

They walked on till they reached Michigan Boulevard, that splendid great avenue which sweeps down by the lake shore, and they wondered how Chicago stands for the smoke of the trains between the Boulevard and the beach.

"Why don't they *make* the old railroad electrify itself?" Spider asked. "Gee, it's turned all the marble sooty black."

It was a hot day, and getting hotter, so they finally went out on a pier and sat in the breeze till it was time to hunt up a place for supper.

After supper they walked around the Loop, which was now filled with theatre crowds, and then back to the station, got their bags, and hunted out the track their train was to go on. The rear observation platform had an illuminated red sign hung out behind, with the name of the train—"Northwest Limited." It gave them a thrill to see those words! And that train for three days would be their home. As soon as the gates were open, they got aboard and hunted out their berths.

The next morning, when they woke, the train was rushing through Iowa. Mile after mile after mile of rolling country, dotted with farmhouses, great red barns, little wood lots close beside them, and endless acres of sprouting corn, and tall wheat, as far as the eye could see. Mile after mile, and never a town, but always the fields of corn and wheat, the herds of cattle, the great red barns.

"Golly!" Bennie exclaimed. "We don't know what a farm is, do we?"

"I never saw so much corn in my life—I didn't know there *was* so much," Spider answered.

That day they passed through Omaha, and were still bowling along through the endless oceans of corn in Nebraska when night came. It was terribly hot now, and dusty and dirty. Spider wiped his face, and when he looked at his handkerchief, it was black! Bennie said he felt as if somebody had poured cinders down his back.

"Wait till you wake up tomorrow," said the brakeman, who overheard them, "and you'll see snow."

"You look sort of honest," Bennie laughed, "but I don't believe you."

"All right," said the brakeman. "Want to bet?"

"Can't," said Bennie. "All my money's in hundred dollar bills."

"We cross the height of land in Wyoming before you're awake," the trainman went on. "We're up 7,000 feet or more there—in Wyoming."

"You mean the Rocky Mountains? Do we cross 'em at night?" cried Spider. "Gee, what tough luck."

"Not much mountains where we cross. But you'll see mountains, all right, if you don't sleep all the morning—and snow, too."

"Bring me some now, I want to take it to bed with me," said Bennie.

Spider, whose turn it was to sleep in the lower berth

that night, pulled up the curtain as soon as it was daylight, and looked out. He gave a jump, reached up and poked Bennie awake, and began to dress. In ten minutes the boys were out on the observation platform, staring hard. The train was in Wyoming now, on a vast, high plateau, a country that didn't look like anything they had ever seen. It rolled away to the horizon in every direction, like a tossing, oily gray sea, without a tree on it, apparently without any grass on it worth mentioning, but covered with pale green sage bushes in clumps here and there. It was a naked, desolate looking land, and yet they saw great droves of cattle wandering over it, and now and then a white strip of road, and finally, all of a sudden as the train rounded a bend, seemingly right beside the track a couple of miles away, a huge blue mountain covered completely on top with a cap of white snow, and streaked with snow all down the ravines on its northern side.

The scouts gave a yell of joy at the sight. "A snow mountain!" they cried.

"Do I win or not?" said the brakeman, appearing behind them. "That's the mountain. Pretty soon, off south, you'll see some higher ones, down in Utah."

"How far is it to that mountain—about five miles?" Bennie asked.

It looked two, but he thought he'd add a few.

The trainman grinned. "I wouldn't try to walk it before breakfast," said he. "It's about twenty or thirty, I reckon."

That day they rolled along through endless miles of

the naked cattle country, that in the East would have seemed like a desert. No New England cow could have lived on it, Spider declared. Then they began to get into the Idaho mountains, on the branch line, and turned and twisted down cañons with the naked red hills folding up in front of and behind the train. They went to sleep in Idaho and woke up in Oregon—woke up to see more mountains, and more snow—long ranges of mountains to left and right with snow on the summits, though it was now almost July first, and hot as Tophet in the train.

The train presently began to climb an endless grade, up and up and up, getting over the pass of the Blue Mountains, and into heavily timbered country—real woods at last, after the long ride through the prairie and the sage brush. On and on went the train, till at last it reached the Columbia River, and the excited boys, braving the cinders that swirled in on the observation platform, sat out there and saw at last below them the great green river rushing swiftly along, cutting its way through the high, rocky banks.

These banks began to get higher and steeper. They were entering the gorge of the Columbia, where it cuts through the Cascade range. Soon the banks were real precipices, 1,000, 2,000 feet high. At The Dalles, they picked up the Columbia Highway, the most wonderful motor road in America, and could see where it was cut right out of the sides of the cliffs in places. When the train stopped at Hood River, a lot of people got off to stretch, the boys with them, and a man took them down the platform and said, "Look!"

They looked to the south, and there it was! Shooting up apparently right behind the depot, shaped like a cone, dazzling white, tall, stately, beautiful against the sky—Mount Hood! These were the eternal snows! There was a real climb!

Bennie just gasped for a second. Then he found his tongue. "It—it's just as big as I thought it would be!" he said.

"It's the finest thing in the world," said the man. "I live in Portland, and every clear day I look at it, sixty miles away, and it's like a friend."

"Is it hard to climb?" Spider asked.

"No," said the man. "It's a cinch. If you're looking for a climb, go down and tackle Jefferson."

"Never even heard of it," said Bennie.

"There are a lot of things out here you eastern folks never heard of," the man answered.

The boys wanted to ask him more, but just then the conductor called "All aboard," and they lost him in the rush.

For the next hour they were busy looking at the scenery, at the great river on one side, and the great cliff walls on the other, with thousand-foot waterfalls leaping down almost on the train, and the Columbia Highway running alongside of the track in places, in other places disappearing and coming into sight again far up on top of some headland.

"Gee, I wish we were in a motor!" Spider sighed.

"Maybe Uncle Bill will take us this way in his," said Bennie.

Now the cliffs grew lower. The river was through

the gorge. Presently the river disappeared, and the train ran through level land a little way, and the houses began to get thicker and thicker. They crossed another river on a drawbridge, and saw tramp ships lying up to the docks, and on the other side rolled into the Portland depot.

At the train gate, looming up above the crowd, Bennie spied the head of his uncle, and in another minute he had him by the hand, and was introducing Spider, and Uncle Billy was putting the dress suitcases into his car, and then they were off through the streets of Portland, with the lights coming on, the darkness falling.

"I guess you boys are pretty hot and tired, eh?" said Uncle Bill. "Of course, you never have any hot weather in the East."

"It's about like this Christmas time at home," Bennie answered. "I was just wishing I had an overcoat."

"You'll wish you had a couple before I get through with you," said Uncle Bill. "I heard to-day there are seven feet of snow yet on the rim of Crater Lake. We've got to camp up there. It'll be pretty slippery, too, getting down to the water. Guess we'll have to fry a couple of ropes."

"Boil mine—about four minutes," said Bennie.

His uncle laughed as he put the car up a steep grade out of the business section to the heights overlooking the city. The residences look right out over the town, and now they could see the checkerboard squares of the streets, marked out with electric lights. They stopped

at the doctor's house, and he showed them in, his housekeeper meeting them.

"Now beat it and get a bath," he said, "and then grub! Hurry up, for I'm all ready to eat, and if you keep me waiting, I'll have to begin on one of those ropes."

"Say, he's a regular scout," said Spider, as they were cleaning up.

"Boy, I got a hunch we're going to have some good time!" answered Bennie from the tub.

CHAPTER V

All Aboard for Crater Lake!—and Dumpling in the Other Car

WHEN the boys came downstairs, Uncle Billy, who was a bachelor, led the way at once into the dining-room, and they began to eat.

"I've got a surprise for you," he said, as he carved the meat. "How'd you boys like to be movie actors?"

"Oh, you Charlie Chaplin!" Bennie grinned. "Sure, I'd like it. Spider, though, ain't beautiful enough."

"Of course, he hasn't your classic Greek features," said Uncle Billy, looking hard at Bennie's snub nose. "But maybe he can ride a horse. Can you ride a horse, Bennie?"

"Sure—I guess so. I never tried."

"Can you, Spider?"

"Not very well, sir. I have ridden our old delivery horse a good bit, though, but mostly bareback."

"You see, Bennie," the doctor laughed, "he's going to be a better actor than you are, after all, in spite of your fatal beauty."

"What do you mean, actors, anyhow?" Bennie demanded. "What's the big idea?"

"Well," the doctor explained, "we're not going alone on this trip. I have a friend, a business man

here in Portland, who is a fine amateur photographer. He's got a new movie camera now, that he wants to experiment with. He wants to take a sort of scenic picture of the Oregon mountains, so he's coming along, in his car, with his son, Lester. You and Spider and Lester and I have got to be the troupe. Whenever he sees a nice precipice he wants to shoot, we'll have to do a Douglas Fairbanks up the side of it, or make a Pearl White jump down a thousand-foot waterfall. How does that strike you?"

"Uncle Billy," Bennie said, very solemnly, "you have come to exactly the right people. Spider and me —I—are the original human flies. We walk up precipices before breakfast every day at home."

"With a boiled rope?" his uncle laughed. "Well, I'm glad you're trained for the job. Wait till you see Lester Stone, though. He's the real athlete! Slender, wiry, hard as nails!"

"How old is he?" the scouts asked, instantly alert and a little bit jealous. They'd show him eastern boys could be hard and athletic, too!

"Just about your age," the doctor answered carelessly. "He and his father will be over to meet you after dinner."

It wasn't long after dinner before the door-bell rang, and the scouts heard Uncle Billy greeting somebody in the hall. A moment later he ushered in a big six-footer of a man, and a boy who was just about as wide as he was high.

"My nephew, Bennie Capen, and his old college chum, Spider Chandler," said Uncle Billy. "Boys,

this is *my* college chum, Dick Stone. And this is Dick's willowy and athletic little son, Lester. I'm trying to get some flesh on his bones, because the poor little thing has been puny since childhood."

Mr. Stone shook hands so hard that Bennie winced, and then they shook hands with Lester, who had a round, pink face like a cherub and eyes that danced merrily.

Bennie and Spider couldn't help bursting out laughing.

"What's the matter?" Uncle Billy asked solemnly. "Did somebody make a joke? I never can see a joke!"

"You can make one, all right," Bennie laughed. "Gee, you said Lester was wiry and hard."

"What's the joke in that?" the doctor demanded, looking very stern. "He is! Only the wires are insulated. You poke his arm and see if he isn't hard."

Lester doubled his fist, and tightened the muscles of his arm, and Bennie and Spider hit him above the elbow. To their amazement, he *was* hard—at that point, anyway. They looked at him with new respect.

"Just the same," Bennie said, "I hope you fried that rope good and plenty."

("He looks just like an apple dumpling," Spider whispered to Bennie, a minute later.)

("Sure, let's call him Dumpling," Bennie whispered back.)

("Guess we'd better not begin right now," Spider suggested. "That guy'd make a great guard on our football team.")

(" If he fell on the ball, it would explode," laughed Spider.)

The rest of the evening was spent in going over the maps of Oregon, to lay out their trip, and in planning equipment. They were to be gone six weeks or more, and expected to camp all the time. As they were going to get from place to place in only two motor cars, which between them had to carry five passengers and all the equipment, it took close figuring. The scouts, of course, didn't have much to say about all this. They just sat and listened, because they were guests, and, besides, they had never been off on such an expedition.

But what fun it was only to listen! Have you ever been off on a camping trip? Of course you have. So you know the joy of getting together a day or two before the start, each person with a list of things he thinks ought to be taken, and then going over the lists, checking them off to see that nothing is being taken that is not needed, and nothing is forgotten that *is* needed. It's almost as much fun as the trip itself.

The scouts soon discovered that Mr. Stone was as jolly as Uncle Billy, and that " Dumpling " was even fuller of fun than his father. Before an hour had passed, the scouts were calling him Dumpling to his face, and then his father and the doctor took it up; but Dumpling himself only grinned the broader and said, " Ho, I don't care what you call me, so long's you call me to dinner."

The next morning the boys were up early, and out

of the house, to get a glimpse across the city of the white pyramid of Mount Hood against the eastern sky. They spent that day hard at work with the doctor getting the equipment out and sorted and packed into the car.

They had never seen an automobile rigged like Uncle Billy's. It was a powerful five-passenger car, with extra braces on the running-boards. First the doctor screwed a kind of iron fence on one running-board which came up as high as the tops of the doors. Then, on the other, he set two boxes, also as high as the doors, and as deep as the running-board. These boxes opened not at the top, but at the front, with hinged doors. Inside of them were shelves. On the shelves of one he stood the provisions—the canned fruits, the condensed milk, and all the other things they were going to take at the start. The other was filled with camp dishes. When the boxes were full, the doors were shut and locked, and the boxes strapped firmly to the car.

Then, on the other side, in the space between the fence and the side of the car, went the heavy canvas bags containing the tent and the three sleeping bags. These bags were wonderful things. They rolled up and went into canvas sacks. But when you unrolled them, you found inside a tire pump, and you pumped them up with air, making a nice pneumatic mattress to sleep on. Inside the canvas flap which strapped over this mattress were several warm blankets.

"Say, boy!" cried Bennie. "This beats sleeping on old hemlock boughs, the way we have to at home,

eh, Spider? Remember the way the boughs used to get all full of sticks about one A. M. last summer?"

"I'll say so. We're going to sleep so well on these we'll forget to wake up."

"Oh, no you won't! Not with me in camp," the doctor smiled.

After the running-boards were loaded, Uncle Billy got out a wonderful camp stove, which collapsed into three pieces, with the funnel also shutting up, and put the whole thing into a canvas sack, which lay on the floor of the car. Then he put in three folding camp stools and a folding table. Finally he handed each boy a stout khaki dunnage bag.

"Now," said he, "get all your stuff into those two bags! No suitcases allowed on this trip! Your two bags and mine, and the canteens and our cameras and the alpenstocks and the fried rope, and overcoats and one of you boys and anything else we've forgotten have all got to go on the rear seat."

"Think I'll sit in front with you," said Bennie.

"Think I'll ride with the Stones," said Spider.

"Not with Dumpling in the car, you won't!" Bennie laughed—"unless he travels in a trailer on behind."

The doctor prescribed early bed that evening, because they were to get an early start.

"What do you call early, seven o'clock?" asked Bennie.

Uncle Billy looked pained. "Seven o'clock!" he sniffed. "My esteemed nephew, at seven o'clock on this trip we will usually have traveled at least fifty

miles, and you'll be asking about lunch. I'll wake you up at five."

"And I thought I was going to have a nice summer!" said Bennie, pretending to be very gloomy.

At five o'clock the next morning, he and Spider were sleeping soundly when a voice boomed into their dreams, "All aboard for Crater Lake! Last call!"

They were out of bed and rushing to get first into the tub before they half knew what had happened.

But it was really long after seven before they got started. The dunnage bags had to be packed with the clothes they were going to need, breakfast eaten, everything gone over again to make sure nothing was forgotten, and then followed a wait of an hour before the Stones' car arrived, loaded down like theirs, with the tripod of the movie camera in a case on top of the luggage in the rear, and Dumpling and his father sitting in front.

"All aboard!" shouted the doctor.

"Well, how do you get aboard?" said Bennie. "You can't open a single door."

"If you can't get into a car over the top of the door you'll never get up Mount Jefferson," said his uncle.

Bennie was in the front seat with exactly two motions. Spider dove into the rear, and found a hole to sit in amid the luggage. The doctor and Mr. Stone tooted their horns, the housekeeper waved from the door—and they were off!

CHAPTER VI

Bennie and Spider Have to Make After-dinner Speeches, and Bennie's Knees Knock

THE day before had been cloudy and cold, though the boys had been too busy with their packing to notice it much. Now, however, that they were off at last, and wanted to see every bit of country there was to be seen, they were acutely conscious that it was a heavy day, without a single glimpse of Mount Hood through the vapor, and the threat of rain at any minute.

"Nice weather you've handed us for a start off," said Bennie to his uncle.

"Oh, this won't last long," Uncle Billy assured him. "We have the finest climate in Oregon of anywhere in the world. It's never very cold in winter, and it's never very hot in summer, and our tent probably won't get wet on this entire trip."

"Is that so?" said Bennie. "Some smart tent, I'll say. Look at your wind-shield."

Indeed, as he spoke, the first drops of the rain began to splash on the glass.

"You wait!" Uncle Billy smiled.

On the edge of Portland they stopped for gas, and the Stones' car pulled in behind them. A big, smiling man, covered with axle grease, came out to fill them up.

"Hello, Doc," he said. "Off for a trip? Got a fine day to start. As far as I can see, it rains for twelve months of the year in Portland, and it ain't very pleasant the rest of the time."

Bennie and Spider shouted with joy at this, and the garage man looked a little surprised.

"Well, that went big!" he said.

"Uncle Bill didn't tip you the wink in time," Bennie answered. "He's just been telling us it never rains in Oregon."

"Sorry I crabbed your game, Doc," the man laughed. "Didn't know these scouts weren't native web-feet."

"They'll not see any more rain till they get back to Portland," the doctor said, quite seriously.

The garage man winked solemnly at Bennie, who grinned back.

"Well, Uncle Bill, we sure have got one on you now," Bennie laughed, as they drove on. "Eh, Spider?"

"Kind of looks so," Spider had to admit.

"The sun will be coming out at Salem, and this is the last rain you'll see, except maybe a thunder shower or two," Uncle Billy persisted. "And now, just for that, I'll tell you something else. We'll get to Salem —that's the State capital—in time for lunch. The Boy Scouts of Salem are going to give us the luncheon, not on your account, but because you are with me. You two boys will have to make speeches. Good, long speeches, too, not just 'Glad to be here.' Got one on me, have you? Take that!"

"Aw, quit your kiddin'," Bennie cried. "Not really, Uncle Bill?"

"Gosh, I never made a speech in my life!" Spider groaned from the rear seat. "I'd just go right down through the floor."

"Our floors are made of good old Douglas fir—not a chance," the doctor grinned. "You'll have to stand right up and show 'em how good Massachusetts is."

"Poor old Massachusetts," said Bennie. "She's got a bum chance to make a hit with us representing her. Oh, golly, what'll I do?"

"I guess you'd better be thinking of something to say as we go along. I was going to stop so we could pick some real Oregon cherries on the way, but maybe I'd better not. You'll need to keep your alleged minds on your speeches."

Bennie and Spider looked at each other and groaned.

"Honest, Uncle Billy, I think this is a real nice climate," said Bennie.

"Ha! nothing doing! You can't get around me that way. Besides, they are probably cooking the luncheon already. The invitations are all out."

"Has old Dumplin' got to make a speech, too?"

"Oh, no," said the doctor. "He's a native, not a distinguished visitor from the East."

"We'll be extinguished visitors by the time it's over," Spider said.

"Hi, that's good! Remember it, and put it in your speech," Bennie cried. "Wish I could think of something funny. Gosh, you never can when you want to." He looked woebegone.

"You get up with a face like that, and you'll make a hit like Charlie Chaplin," Spider assured him.

The boys cheered up a bit, however, as the rain ceased and the car sped on up a good road, through the rich fields of the Willamette valley, mile after mile of prune orchards and cherry orchards and hop plantations and Loganberry fields where the canes, tied in rows to wires, stretched for hundreds of yards on either side of the road.

Presently they came to a "ranch" (as everybody out there calls his farm or orchard), where the cherries were being picked, and the doctor stopped the car. The Stones, who were right behind, stopped too, and everybody got out.

"Sell us some cherries?" asked the doctor.

"Got anything to pick 'em in?" asked the owner of the orchard.

"Sure—the radiator pails."

"All right, you can pick all you want in that first tree, for fifty cents. Hold on, though. Not that cute little feller there. I don't want my tree busted down."

"I'll stand below and you can throw 'em into my mouth," Dumpling laughed.

They got the collapsible canvas pails which were carried in the cars to fill the radiators with, and began to pick. The cherries were huge things, of a deep, wonderful, winey red, and almost melted in your mouth. Bennie and Spider had never seen nor tasted such cherries, and they ate two for every one they picked. The pails were full in five minutes, at that, and still the tree hardly seemed touched.

"What's the name of these babies?" Bennie asked.

"Bing," said the doctor.

"No, I didn't ask you to play soldier. I asked you what's the name of these cherries?"

"Bing, I tell you. Bing, B-i-n-g."

"Well, it sounds like Bing," Bennie laughed. "That's a silly name for a cherry, but, oh, boy, some fruit!"

"You won't be in any condition to eat that lunch when we get to Salem," the doctor laughed.

"Soon's I get there, and think about that old speech again, I won't want any lunch, anyhow," Bennie answered. "Might 's well fill up now."

The two cars rolled into Salem at noon. Salem is a small city, built around a large central park in which the State Capitol building stands. This park was now filled with roses, the bushes even growing in long rows between the sidewalks and the street. The doctor ran the car around this park, and then hunted up the camp where they were to be entertained by the Salem Boy Scouts. This was in a grove, just outside the town, and about fifty scouts were already there, with three or four fires going. As the two cars came up, the scout master gave a sharp command, the troops fell into formation, at attention, and there was a loud cheer of welcome as Bennie and Spider tried to climb out over the luggage gracefully. Poor Dumpling had a hard time getting out of his car, but not one of the Salem scouts laughed. In a few minutes, the scout master had presented the guests all around, and preparations for the luncheon began in earnest.

It was a good lesson in scouting, all right. Different boys had definite jobs, and they went at them quickly and efficiently. Sawhorses and boards were produced from a wagon, and made into rough tables. More boards, on boxes, made the seats. Paper plates, knives, forks, and spoons, and tin cups were put in place. The scouts who could cook best were busy at the fires. There was the smell of coffee, of broiling steak, of frying potatoes, and of flapjacks. Three or four of the scouts meanwhile were putting great dishes of fruit—berries and cherries—on the tables. In spite of all the cherries they had eaten, the smells made Spider and Bennie hungry again. They tried, of course, to help with the preparations, but the Salem scouts wouldn't let them.

"No, you're guests," the scout master said.

Finally the scout master clapped his hands, and called in a loud voice, "Come and get it!" This was the first time Spider and Bennie had heard the western camp call to grub. But they didn't need to be told what it meant.

As soon as the food was eaten, the scout master rose in his place, and announced that troop leader Tom Robinson would welcome their guests to Oregon. Tom Robinson, a tall, powerful boy of sixteen, got up looking extremely scared, and everybody shouted and applauded, whereupon he looked scareder still. But he made a nice little speech, in spite of his nervousness, telling Spider and Bennie how glad the Salem scouts were that they had come so far to see Oregon, which, he said, had the finest climate in the world, and hoping

they'd have a good time, and inviting them to come and visit the Salem scouts in their camp up in the mountains in August.

Everybody applauded again, and then looked at Spider and Bennie, yelling, "Speech, speech!"

"You do it," whispered Bennie to Spider.

"Go on—you got to do it," Spider retorted.

"You've both got to do it," the scout master laughed.

So Bennie got up. He felt queer in his knees, which didn't seem to half hold him up, and his mouth felt dry. When he finally spoke, his voice sounded strange to him, as if it belonged to somebody else.

"We're awfully glad to be here," he said, "and you scouts are sure good to us to give us this grand feed. I ate so many Bing cherries this morning I thought all I could do would be to make a noise like a robin, but I sure got away with my share of the grub. It's pretty fine to come 4,000 miles, all across the U. S. A., and find a bunch of scouts out here just the same as at home. Some organization, the Boy Scouts! 'Course, we came to see the wilderness, and about all the wilderness we've seen so far is a big city like Portland, and Salem, and about ten million fruit trees, and sixteen million automobiles. And we heard it was a good climate out here, too, but my uncle's garage man says it rains twelve months in the year and isn't very pleasant the rest of the time. But we sure like Oregon, and you fellows are a great bunch of scouts, and—and I guess that's all I got to say."

Bennie sat down abruptly, amid much applause.

"Some speech!" Spider whispered.

It was now Spider's turn.

"Everything Bennie said goes for me," he began, "except this knock on the climate. It was raining when we left Portland, but Dr. Warren told us it would be clear when we got to Salem, and here's the old sun coming out now. I want to say the Salem climate's all right—like the Salem scouts. And Bennie forgot something, too. He's always forgetting things. Once he forgot it was vacation, and tried to get into the schoolhouse. Now he's forgotten to say to you fellows that when any of you come East, you just show up in Southmead, where we live, and we'll try to be half as decent to you as you've been to us. And we hope you'll all come."

Loud cheers greeted this speech, and Bennie applauded harder than anybody.

"That last part goes, you bet," he shouted. "I didn't really forget it, though. I just got rattled."

The meeting broke up with a scout cheer, and the boys heard the shouts and good-byes even after the cars had started down the road.

"Some swell feed!" said Bennie. "Pretty nice of 'em, eh, Spider? I guess they must like you pretty well, Uncle Bill, or they wouldn't have done this for us."

"I ran into them in their camp last summer, and got to know 'em," the doctor answered. "Well, how do you like being an after-dinner orator?"

Bennie looked sober. "Tell you one thing," he replied. "Next year in school I'm going in for debat-

ing, the way Spider does. I'm not going to feel such a boob on my feet again. Gee, I was scared pink."

"I won't let you forget that, Bennie," said Spider. "We'll make a Demosthenes of you yet."

The cars were now racing southward up the Willamette valley, and traveling on the fine Pacific Highway, which stretches all the way from Portland to the California boundary.

"I want to make Eugene tonight," said Uncle Billy. "That's why I'm stepping on her. Eugene is the town where the State University is—the college that Harvard came west to play football with a few years ago. We'll find a good camp site just south of Eugene, and spend the night there. Tomorrow we'll push on as far as we can toward Medford."

"When do we get to Crater Lake?" the boys asked.

"Well, I doubt if we make Medford tomorrow. It'll take another day. Then we'll stock up with provisions, and try to make the lake the next day, which will be the Fourth of July. That's the day the Park is due to open."

"Can we get some firecrackers in Medford?"

"Sure!" the doctor laughed.

The valley grew narrower as they ran on southward, and the hills on either side seemed higher. But still the boys saw no mountains, and none of the great forest trees they'd heard about in Oregon. They reached Eugene late in the day—a lively little town, with the big, handsome buildings of the University dominating it. Still they saw no mountains.

"Well, I suppose there *are* some, but you got to show me," Bennie declared.

Beyond the town, they ran the cars up a side road to a patch of woods by a stream, and hurried to make camp and get supper before it was dark.

"Let's see how good scouts you really are," Mr. Stone said to the boys. "One of you set up the stove and make a fire, and two of you get up the tents and blow up the sleeping bags. Uncle Bill and I will get the grub ready."

Dumplin' took the stove as his job, because he knew how it worked. As soon as it was set up, he hustled around for dead wood. Meanwhile Bennie and Spider strung the ropes between trees for the tents, cut pegs, and got the tents up. Then they tackled the sleeping bags. It was warm that evening, and before they had gone far they were hot.

"Say, how much air do these things hold?" Bennie called. "I been pumping an hour."

"Well, sleep on it flat if you're tired. But I want mine blown up," his uncle answered.

At last they had all five bags blown up and laid in the tents. By this time the fire was roaring in the stove, and Dumplin' had a neat little wood-pile beside it, the two men had set up a folding table and chairs, and food and coffee were cooking on the stove. Pretty soon Mr. Stone called out, "Come and get it!" and with a lantern hanging from a limb over the table, they all sat down.

"Well, this sure beats a hotel!" said Uncle Bill.

"Beats a couple of hotels," said Dumplin', wiping

his perspiring forehead. "You don't have to wear a coat here."

"Wait till you get to the lake, and you'll be hollering for a coat," his father smiled.

After supper, the boys drew lots to see who would wash the dishes. Bennie lost, and the rest built a little camp fire between the two tents while he was clearing up. They lay around the fire talking for an hour, and then Uncle Billy ordered "Bed!"

"Early start tomorrow," he said. "Everybody out at five."

The boys undressed and crawled into their sleeping bags. Then they bounced up and down to feel how comfortable they were.

"Mine's too hard," said Bennie.

"So's mine," said Spider.

"You've got so much air in mine I'll have a blowout," said Uncle Billy.

"Gee, think of all that work for nothing!" Bennie groaned.

If anybody had been outside the tent, he would have heard three little hisses as they let some air out of their beds. Then, three minutes later, he would have heard three people breathing in sound slumber.

CHAPTER VII

Held Up by the Snow, With the Thermometer at 86°

THE next day, sure enough Uncle Billy routed everybody out at five o'clock. They had pancakes and syrup, and bacon and coffee and toast for breakfast, and then camp had to be struck and the cars packed again. The sleeping bags had to be deflated and rolled up by the three boys, and put in their canvas cases. The tents had to be rolled up and also put in cases. The dunnage bags had to be repacked, the dishes washed and put into the boxes on Uncle Billy's car. It was long after seven before they got away.

On this day, at last, they began to get a taste of wild Oregon—but just a taste, the doctor told them. They finally came to the head of the Willamette valley, and climbed up a long grade, beside a wild, tumbling stream, amid huge old fir trees, and then down a long, wooded cañon on the farther side. They rolled through more valleys full of fruit orchards, and they passed through several towns. In one of them, where they stopped to get an ice cream soda—or rather ice cream sodas, for both the scouts had two apiece and Dumplin' had three—a big banner was stretched across the street, with the words on it in letters two feet high:

IT'S THE CLIMATE.

"Golly, you wouldn't think they had any climate

anywhere else," said Bennie. "Out here, you've only got one kind. In little old Massachusetts we have every kind."

"Sure, and on the same day, too," Uncle Billy laughed.

All that afternoon they climbed up endless grades, where the highway was cut out of the sides of the cañons, and the great trees shadowed the road, and down again, and up again.

"Are we in the Cascade Mountains now?" the boys asked.

"No, these are just hills," said the doctor. "You won't see any mountains till we get almost into Medford. Cheer up, they'll be there tomorrow."

The grades were so numerous, and so long and hard, that it was impossible to make as many miles in a day here as it is in the East. As the sun began to sink, the doctor began watching for camp sites, and presently he pulled into a field beside the road where a brook came down from a hill, and they camped for a second night on the road.

An early start again was ordered, and now the grades grew less severe again, and after a few hours the cars ran out into a wide plain, and suddenly the boys gave a yell.

"The mountains!" they cried.

Sure enough, there they were. To the east lay the blue rampart of the Cascade range, and right in the centre, covered white with snow, shot up the peaked pyramid of Mount McLaughlin. To the south and west, shutting the valley in, rose more mountains, some

of them still showing snow on their summits. Across the head of the valley ran a tumbling green stream, the Rogue River.

"That river comes down from close to Crater Lake," said Uncle Billy.

"Gee, I'd like to get into it right now," Bennie remarked.

A dozen miles more, and they were in Medford, a neat, clean little city (it would be called a town in the East), surrounded by flourishing fruit orchards and grain fields. The boys scouted around for some crackers and fireworks, while the men restocked the cars with provisions, got gas and oil, and inquired about the road to the lake.

"Well," said the doctor, as they met at the cars again, "we don't get to Crater Lake tomorrow."

"Aw, gee, why not?" Bennie demanded.

"Road's not open yet to the rim. Can't get much beyond Government Camp."

"What's the trouble—snow?" asked Mr. Stone.

The doctor nodded.

"Snow!" said Spider, wiping his hot forehead. "Don't sound possible."

"It's the climate," said Bennie.

Everybody laughed, and Dumplin' announced he was going to get another ice cream soda while the leaders decided what to do.

When he came back, the doctor and Mr. Stone had decided to go back up the road and then up the Rogue River for a few miles, on the way to Crater Lake, and camp there over the Fourth and the day following.

By the third day it was probable, the doctor said, that the government rangers would have the snow blasted out of the road.

"*Blasted* out?" said Spider.

"Sure; they use TNT. It would take forever to shovel those drifts."

"Oh, let's go up and watch 'em!" Bennie pleaded.

"And get the cars mired? No, thank you! We'll camp by the Rogue River and wait. You can swim and Spider can study birds, and Dumplin' can wish he was nearer a soda fountain. Come on."

They turned off the highway at the Rogue River bridge, and the minute they were off the macadam the dust began to fly. Spider looked back into the cloud.

"Glad I'm not in the Stones' car," he said. "What makes it so dusty?"

"This soil is all volcanic ash or pumice," said the doctor, "and it hasn't rained here, probably, for a month, and won't for five or six more."

"It's the climate," chuckled Bennie.

Two or three miles up this dusty road, and close to a small, dilapidated looking house, made of boards and huge, hand-hewn shingles or "shakes," the doctor put the car off the road and into a field which was baked as hard as a brick, with the grass dried up and brown. At the edge of this field was a grove of trees with shiny copper-colored bark and glossy green leaves, called laurel trees, and beyond them the bank plunged sharp down for fifty feet to the rushing green river.

"Camp," said Uncle Billy, stopping the car. "Here's where we live for two days at least."

As soon as camp was made, and wood cut, the entire party ran down the bank to a gravelly beach by the river's edge, stripped, and plunged into the water. Five yells immediately rose in the stillness, and five bodies came splashing back to shore.

"That water comes down from the snow-fields, all right," said Mr. Stone.

"That's why it's so green," said the doctor.

"And why Dumplin's so pink," laughed Bennie, pointing at Lester, who certainly looked like a very plump boiled lobster.

That night they sang and joked around the camp fire till nine o'clock, because there was no early start in the morning. When Bennie woke up, however, he saw that Spider's bed was empty. Going down to the river in his pyjamas, for a plunge, he found Spider, all dressed, with a note-book in his hand, watching birds.

"Gee, this is a great place to see birds," Spider called. "I've got nine kinds already, most of 'em that I never saw before. And you want to watch for the funny little lizards on the ground."

Bennie almost immediately heard a rustle in the dead leaves beside him, and looking down saw a small lizard-like creature scurry up on to a flat stone. He reached down to pick it up—and the lizard wasn't there! He was on a stone two feet away.

"Say!" he called, "this is the quickest thing I ever saw. Beats a weasel."

"Mr. Stone says they call 'em swifts," Spider answered.

Among the new birds that Spider saw, and added to

his bird list, he later learned from Mr. Stone and the doctor, were ravens, western tanagers (a beautiful, bright yellow bird), valley quail, camp robbers, water ousels, which live always by the water and build their nests behind the waterfalls, the western catbird, which is much like the eastern, only brownish, and blue jays of a much darker color than in the East. These jays fought and squawked around the camp all day long. Then there were crows and other birds he already knew.

"Well, never mind your old birds now," Bennie said after breakfast. "This is the Glorious Fourth. Let's fire off some crackers and do something to celebrate."

"We might run down to Medford and see the parade," the doctor suggested.

This was hailed with delight, so they unpacked the cars, and started off for the day. Medford was full of people. There was a parade and a ball game and a lively time generally.

"Well, this is what I call wild life in Oregon," Bennie laughed. "We came 4,000 miles to get into the wilderness, and here we are with about ten thousand other people watching a parade in a city. Some wilderness!"

"You wait," his uncle cautioned. "In about a week, you'll have so much wilderness you'll be crying for home and mother."

That night, back in camp, they set off their own fireworks, shooting the rockets from an improvised chute out over the water, and the next day they spent in exploring two or three old gold diggings they found by

the bank—shafts which some prospector had laboriously dug far into the earth, but without getting much gold, apparently, for the diggings had all been abandoned. Bennie and Spider spent two or three hours searching everywhere for nuggets, but they found nothing. It was hot and sultry, too, and everybody was getting impatient.

"I'm going to start tomorrow for the lake," the doctor said that night. "We'll camp below the rim if we can't get up. It's too hot here."

"It's the climate," said Bennie—and the doctor and Dumplin' fell upon him and rolled him on the hard ground till he howled for mercy.

CHAPTER VIII

Up to the Rim of Crater Lake at Last, Through the Snow-drifts

EVERYBODY was out at 4:30 the next morning. The hot weather still held. In fact, it was hotter than the day before. Bennie waited till he was on the extreme edge of camp, with a clear field to run in, and then remarked, "It's the climate."

But everybody was too busy packing to chase him.

At seven o'clock the cars were ready, and the start was at last made on the last lap for Crater Lake.

"It's only eighty miles—even a bit less from here, I guess. But it's up-hill all the way, and of course we don't know what kind of roads we're going to get into."

For many miles they ran along past scattered ranches where the irrigation ditches paralleled the road, and the alfalfa scented the air. Then the country began to get rougher, the road began to climb, the tumbling, foaming green river dropped farther and farther below them into a wild ravine, while they climbed along the side.

"This is something like!" Bennie shouted. "Bring on some more of your old wilderness!"

"You'll get some more pretty soon now."

They passed a little settlement, where both cars stopped for gas and to let the engines cool, and then the road ran into a forest, and traveled straight as an arrow, making a long aisle as far as the eye could see.

"Government forest," the doctor said. "This is a government road. Well, boys, what do you think of these trees?"

The boys looked on either side of the dusty white road, into stands of Douglas fir that almost took their breath away—great giants six and eight feet through, and rising without any branches for a hundred feet or more, straight as masts, and after the first branches going on up another fifty or a hundred feet.

"Some shrubs," said Bennie.

"You'll see a lot of bigger ones before we get back to Portland," said the doctor.

After running for ten miles or so through the forest, while the car and their faces became covered with the white pumice dust, they came suddenly on a beautiful, cold little stream, and beside this stream an open camp ground, maintained by the government for anybody who wanted to use it. Here they stopped for early lunch, under the cool shadows of the great trees.

There were at least a dozen other cars there, and half as many tents were pitched in the woods. Fires were going. Some campers had wash hung out to dry. The camp was clean and well cared for.

"Well," said Spider, looking around, "all I can say is that Massachusetts has got something to learn from Oregon. If you tried to camp anywhere at home,

you'd get chased off. And when the State does get any land for a forest, it doesn't make any provisions for camping. They won't let you build a fire. Can't camp without a fire."

"Here's something for you scouts to think about," Mr. Stone said. "Why don't you talk up State forests and camp sites when you go home? The Boy Scouts could do a lot if they all got together."

"You bet we'll think about it," Spider said. "Why, there's a State reservation right near Southmead, and a nice park on it, and the State hasn't even made a path around the pond so you can get to the water."

"People in the East haven't learned how to camp yet, anyway," the doctor said. "They think they've got to have a hotel every fifty miles."

"Sure," said Bennie. "Ma's idea of roughing it is to have hot and cold water and steam heat."

After lunch they pushed on, and soon began to climb again, up and up, while the radiators boiled in the heat, till they came to the entrance of the Crater Lake National Park, where they stopped to pay the tolls on the cars, and have a tag pasted on the wind-shield. While this was being done, the boys crossed the road and looked down into a tremendous gorge cut by Castle Creek into the lava rock. It was their first real taste of what was ahead. Soon after this, as the road kept on climbing, they began to get glimpses through the trees of mountain tops, covered with snow, and before long the road began to get muddy in places, as if the snow had but recently melted from it.

At last they reached Government Camp, where the

Park superintendent and the rangers live, at the foot of the last slope to the rim. Here there were great patches of snow all about in the woods, and trickles of water beside the road.

"Can we get up to the rim?" the doctor called to someone in a doorway.

"Half a dozen cars have gone up, and haven't come back," a voice answered.

"Maybe they can't get back," the doctor laughed.

"Maybe," said the other man. "But I reckon they got through. Better put on your chains, though."

After the chains were put on both cars, they started out once more, on the last pull to the lake.

"Only three or four miles now," said Uncle Billy, "and a thousand feet to climb."

The road was muddy, but well graded, as it wound up the ravine, through heavy timber, with great drifts of snow on either side. Before long they came to places where the drifts had been shoveled out to let the road through, and in these places the road was so soft that everybody but the drivers got out and walked. The boys made snowballs and pelted each other. Once or twice the cars stuck, and they had to get boughs to put under the wheels. But there was no serious delay till they were almost at the top of the climb. Here they found several cars stalled ahead of them. Going forward, they found that one big drift was still in the way. Part of it was cut through, but the last end was still ten feet of solid snow. The rangers were even now laying a train of TNT through it, and connecting the fuses. The boys rushed back for their cameras.

When the dozen charges were ready, everybody ran out of the way. A ranger connected the wires, and went back behind a tree to the battery. A moment later there was a terrific explosion, and a huge geyser of black smoke and black water rose from the drift, the blackened water settling down in a fine, dirty mist on the snow to leeward.

"Gosh, I hope I snapped that at the right time!" said Bennie. "Made me jump so, I couldn't tell."

Mr. Stone, who was working with a graflex, said he thought he got a good one, anyway. Then they went forward and found the twelve charges had blasted out a deep ditch in the snow right through the drift. Men sprang in with shovels, and in fifteen minutes the cars could plough through. From there on the snow was melted from the road, and flowers were already coming up through the soft brown pumice soil.

Right ahead of them the boys saw the hotel, and in front of the hotel the land seemed to disappear. It didn't look at all like a mountain here. The road was now quite level, and there were woods all about. Only to the right there was a mountain peak, close by, covered with a great cap of snow. It looked more as if they were coming to the edge of some cañon.

"Where's the lake?" they demanded.

"Can you stand it for two minutes more?" the doctor asked.

Now the car was close to the hotel. The boys jumped out and ran ahead, up a little grade. And then they stopped stone dead, and drew in a long breath of astonishment.

Right under their feet the land fell away at so sharp an angle that it was practically a precipice, for more than a thousand feet. This great precipice stretched out to right and left, rising here and there into crags and cliffs a thousand feet above them, and swung around in a vast circle six miles in diameter, thus making what looked like a gigantic hole in the earth. At the bottom of this hole lay the lake; but it was not an ordinary lake. It was not just water. In fact, it didn't look like water. It was a wonderful, a vivid, an unbelievable blue. It was bluer than the sky.

"It's the bluest thing I ever saw!" cried Bennie. "Wow! how do you get down to it?"

"There's just one trail down here," his uncle answered, "and one around on the east side. Those are the only two ways down to the water."

"And what's that little peaked island out there?" Spider asked, pointing to what looked like a pile of cinders at one side of the lake, cinders covered with green weeds.

"That's Wizard Island. After this old volcano collapsed into the crater, and before it filled with water, she started up again to build a new volcano. That island is the result. It's a little volcano all by itself, with a crater in the top. That island is 800 feet above the water line, and the green you see on it is made by big trees."

"Gosh!" said Bennie. "It looks about eight feet high, instead of 800. Can we get to it?"

"We'll get to it, all right. But we've got to make camp before we do anything."



Crater Lake — Wizard Island, and over it Llao Rock

"Will you tell us after supper all about this lake, how it got made and everything?" Spider asked. "Gee, I wish I'd studied geology."

"You've come to the right place to begin," said the doctor. "But now for a camp site. Come on with me."

Leaving the cars, they walked westward along the rim, looking for a chance to get the cars through the drifts. They could manage, they found, to run them a few hundred feet west of the hotel, along what looked like a road. There was a considerable open space between the edge of the rim and the timber, however, and to get back from the rim to the trees they had to get the camp spades out of the cars and dig a ditch through two feet of snow. At last the cars were through, and a comparatively dry spot found under some big fir trees. Here the tents were put up, with the stove between them, the cars unpacked, the beds inflated, and Dumplin' and Bennie went after wood while Spider took the pails and went back over the snow toward the hotel for water. All the water has to be pumped up to the hotel and the camp grounds from a spring back down the road. When he returned, he reported that already a dozen more cars had arrived, several tents were going up, and there were a lot of people at the hotel.

Meanwhile Bennie and Dumplin' had discovered that past campers had cleaned out so much of the dead wood that it was hard to find enough for a fire, especially as the woods were still full of snow and the fallen branches buried or else soaking wet. However,

they rustled up enough for that night and breakfast, and preparations for supper began.

As the sun got lower and lower, the water of the lake seemed to turn a darker and darker blue, and the snow cap on Garfield, the peak just to the east, turned a lovely rose red—and Bennie put on his coat.

"What you putting that on for?" his uncle asked.

"It's the climate," said Bennie, with a grin.

"Well, suppose you and Dump go drain the radiators before we forget it," the doctor laughed.

"What do you mean, drain the radiators? Are you kidding?" the boys demanded.

"Kidding? Not on your life. Go do as I tell you."

"But, gee whiz, they were *boiling* about three hours ago," Dumplin' said.

"That was three hours ago, and 2,000 feet lower. Go do as I tell you."

"Some climate, I'll say!" Bennie laughed. But he was still skeptical, it was plain to see. He thought his uncle was trying to play a joke on him. However, he and Dumplin' drained the cars.

A few minutes later they heard the welcome call from the camp, "Come and get it!"

CHAPTER IX

The Mountain That Fell Into Itself

IT was still twilight when dinner was over, and the doctor said, "First class in geology will now be held on Victory Rock. Do you scouts have merit badges in geology, by the way?"

"No," said Spider.

"That's funny. Seems to me you ought to," Mr. Stone declared. "Scouts are hiking around the country all the time, and it's a mighty good chance to see how the earth was made."

Victory Rock, the boys found, is a kind of bowsprit of lava thrust out from the rim, so that when you stand on it you can see almost all the circle of the lake, and the water appears to be directly under you.

"Now, take a good look," Uncle Billy said, "and then try to imagine what this place was like before the big explosion. The rim here is 7,000 feet above sea level. In other words, we've climbed up, to get here, about half the height of the original mountain. We are about at snow line."

"About!" Bennie laughed. "About is good!"

"Now just imagine the line of ascent we took from Government Camp carried right on up, all around the lake. When the slopes met, over the middle, in the

peak of the original mountain, geologists reckon that peak was from 14,000 to 15,000 feet high. This was one of the highest mountains, if not the highest, in the United States proper. It was an active volcano, of course. If you'll look over there to the northwest, you'll see a big, steep precipice with a rounded top. That's called Llao Rock. Do you see how the bottom of it curves up at either end? Well, that curve shows you where the bottom of a ravine was on the original mountain. In some eruption, ages ago, a great stream of lava flowed down that ravine, filled it up to overflowing, and hardened into rock. If you travel around the lake, you can pick out where each ravine was by the laval cliffs."

"How high is that Llao Rock?" asked Spider.

"About 2,000 feet from the water."

"Gee, then that lava stream was more'n a thousand feet deep!"

"It was," said the doctor. "Much more."

"And then what happened?" Bennie asked.

"Well, I wasn't here at the time," said Uncle Billy, "but as near as the scientists can figure it out, there must have been a tremendous eruption, scattering pumice all over Oregon and making a lot of our rich soil, and then, at the level where we are now, probably a lot of vent holes blew out, making the whole top of the mountain, which was only a shell around the great crater hole, so insecure that it just toppled inward of its own weight. About seven or eight thousand feet of the mountain just collapsed into the crater."

"Say, I'd like to have been here with the old kodak!" Bennie cried. "And then what happened?"

"Well, then the bottom of the crater evidently started to spit again, and build up a new mountain. It built up a perfect cone, just the shape of the old mountain, almost to the level of the rim. That's Wizard Island out there. Wizard Island is a later kind of lava and volcanic stuff than what you find in the rim walls. But the old mountain got tired about then, and decided to call it a day, and it's been resting ever since."

"But how did the water get here?" Dumplin' asked.

"Out of the sky. There are no springs, so far as anybody knows, in the crater. That water has just come from the snow and rain—mostly snow, which has been falling into the hole for untold ages. Over on the east side of the lake, it is 2,000 feet deep."

"Say, you could almost dive there without hitting your head on bottom, couldn't you?" Bennie laughed. "What makes it so blue?"

"Nobody seems to know that. Some people think there must be some chemical or mineral gets into it. Anyway, there's no other lake in the world which has its color."

"I'll bet there isn't!" Spider declared. "My, it's a beautiful thing. When are we going down to it? Are there boats on it? How do they get the boats down there?"

"One at a time!" Mr. Stone laughed. "We'll go down as soon as the trail is opened. They get the boats down the trail on wheels, by man power, and

keep 'em winters over on Wizard Island. You could see the boat-house if it wasn't so dark."

"Let's go over to the hotel and find out if the trail is open yet!" the boys cried, and led the way without waiting for an answer.

No, the trail wasn't open, the hotel manager told them. But the boatmen had been down and got some rowboats out, and two men had gone down fishing that afternoon.

"But it's not a safe trip," the manager added. "We don't advise anybody to try it. The government is going to begin shoveling the snow out of the trail tomorrow morning. You'd better wait a day or two."

They thanked him, bought some souvenir post-cards to send home, and went back to camp.

"Have we got to wait?" the boys demanded.

The two men only smiled.

"Better be up early," they said. "We might have a try at it. Can't tell. Bennie seems to want a bit of real wild stuff. Maybe we can give it to him."

There was not wood enough in camp to make a camp fire, and no chance to get any more till daylight. Everybody had put on his sweater, and the air was getting colder and colder.

"Nothing for it but to go to bed," Mr. Stone declared. "And be thankful you have those blankets you didn't need at Rogue River."

"It's the climate!" said Bennie, as he shivered in his pyjamas and wriggled hastily in between all the blankets he could stuff into his sleeping bag. "Oh, you blankets!"

"And down in Medford, eighty miles away, they're probably kicking off the sheets," laughed Uncle Billy. "What do you think of Crater Lake now, eh?"

But Bennie only grunted. He was already half asleep.

CHAPTER X

Down the Rim to the Lake—The Boys Ski on a Crater Snow-drift in July

THE two scouts were first awake the next morning. They took no more time getting dressed than the law allowed, for it was shivery cold, and then went outside the tent to wash. The sun was just coming up, and the night mists still hung around the sides of the rim and over the water of the lake, which was so still that it was exactly like a huge bright blue mirror, six miles wide, in which everything hung upside down. The water in the pails side of the tent had a skim of ice over it!

Bennie broke the ice and poured some water in a basin, dousing it on his face and spluttering with the cold. They went over the snow-drifts to the tap to get more water, and the snow was crusted and held them up so that their hobnailed boots crunched and squeaked on it.

"And this is July 7th!" said Spider. "Well, you thought your uncle was joshing about the radiator last night, didn't you?"

"I sure did," Bennie answered. "Didn't realize what a difference altitude makes."

After they had brought the water, and made a fire in the stove, the scouts went off after a wood supply,



Campers at the Rim of Crater Lake. Mid-July Snow in Foreground

while the rest were dressing. They wandered a long way back down the slope, through the forest, and tried to imagine, as they looked back, that instead of being cut off at the rim the mountain went on up another 8,000 feet.

"I guess if it did, we'd be on a glacier here, instead of just snow," said Spider. "Look, Bennie, at those flowers coming up within a foot of this drift! I'm going to collect a lot of flowers on this trip, and get a merit badge in botany, too. Why don't you get after some merit badges?"

"Aw, gee, what good am I at botany and stuff like that?"

"Well, you could go after one in forestry. We'll be seeing a lot of real forests. And there's hiking, and camping. Oh, lots of 'em."

"Got your manual with you?"

"Sure."

"Well, let's look 'em up later, and see what chance a dub like me has," Bennie answered. "But this ain't getting us much fire wood."

They were so far from the camp ground now that dead wood was plentiful, and they returned to camp over the drifts and the bare clearings where the wild flowers were just sprouting—spring in July—dragging dead limbs enough to last two or three days. The smell of coffee and bacon greeted them as they came up the last slope to the camp.

"By the way," Spider asked at breakfast, "what was the name of this mountain before it fell into itself?"

"Who was there to name it, you poor fish?" laughed Bennie.

"I never thought of that!"

"It has a posthumous name, though," said Mr. Stone.

"Come again—come again!" Bennie said. "What kind of a name?"

"Ho, I know what that means!" put in Dumplin', his mouth full of wheat cakes.

"What *what* means?" the rest demanded.

"P-p"—he swallowed hard, and then got it out—"posthumous."

"Well, what does it mean?"

"It means something that comes after you're dead. If a man writes a book that ain't printed till he's dead, it's a posthumous book."

"My son," said Mr. Stone, "I am proud of you."

"Not to say surprised at him," the doctor laughed.

Dumplin' grinned triumphantly, and reached out for more cakes.

"Well, what was its p-p-posthumous name?" Bennie demanded.

"They call the mountain Mount Mazama. You see, there's a famous club of mountaineers in Portland, who are called the Mazamas, and that's why the name was given to this vanished peak."

"Mazama—sounds sort of Indian."

"It is—it's the Indian word for a mountain goat."

"That's us," said Bennie. "When do we leap lightly down the rim to the water?"

"As soon as you've washed the dishes," said his uncle.

The sun was well up when they started, and the chill had gone from the air. You could hardly believe water had frozen two hours before. Mr. Stone carried his movie camera, which weighed fifty pounds, on his back in a knapsack made for it, Dumplin' carried the tripod, also in a sack, Bennie and Spider carried their canteens filled with spring water, their cameras, and the lunch in knapsacks. The doctor had two canteens and the coil of 125 feet of soft alpine braided rope. Everybody had an alpenstock. As the little procession passed the hotel, the people there looked at them curiously.

"You evidently mean business," somebody said.

"We're going down to the lake," said the doctor.

"I wouldn't try it, if I were you," the other man replied. "Two chaps went down yesterday, and they had a pretty bad time. They say it's extremely dangerous."

"We'll take a chance," said Uncle Billy.

The trail starts down just east of the hotel. It is a wide footpath cut in the soft lava and the powdery pumice and conglomerate of the slope, switchbacking down a sharp ravine. But this ravine was now almost filled with snow, so that the path was buried, and the descent had to be made over the bare snow slope, at an angle of fifty degrees. If you once started slipping, there was nothing to stop you for a thousand feet. The park gang of a dozen men or more, with shovels, were just attacking the snow at the top, shovel-

ing out the path and tossing the snow chunks on to the slope, down which they slid and bounded like a bombardment.

The doctor led the way past the shovelers, so they would be out of the range of the falling lumps, uncoiled the rope, tied one end around his waist, flung the other end down the slope, drove his alpenstock deep and firm, braced his feet, and said:

"Now, you all go down to the end, one at a time. Keep a firm hold on the rope. Don't ever let go with more than one hand. When you get to the bottom, brace your stocks, and Stone, you take up the slack on me as I come down."

One by one the boys and Mr. Stone faced half sideways to the slope, kept hold of the rope with the right hand, and went down the 125 feet step by step. As Bennie started down, he saw that just above them on the rim were a dozen people, come from the hotel to watch.

"Gee, this is the life!" he shouted.

The boys watched Uncle Billy come down when everybody else was at the rope's end. He had no rope to help him, of course, but he used his alpenstock with one hand, and drove his boots firmly into the snow with a sideways motion which made a little step for him.

"Guess old Uncle Bill knows his way about," thought Bennie.

From this point, the operation was repeated, getting them down 250 feet. But by now the shovelers in the path above had worked ahead, and the snow

chunks were whizzing past uncomfortably close. They saw that the ravine narrowed ahead of them into a kind of bottle neck, and all the chunks worked into that neck. They would have to pass right through it. No use in yelling up to the shovelers to quit, either. Their job was to get the trail opened as soon as possible. Besides, they were laughing, and the little party down in the ravine knew that meant they were just waiting to get them into the narrow place and bombard them.

"Keep half an eye up the slope this next drop," the doctor said, "and watch out for cannon balls. Those fellows up there are going to wing us if they can. The chunks won't break any bones, but they'll hurt. Once we're through the neck, we can get round behind that rock, and be out of range."

"Let her go!" said Mr. Stone.

Nobody lost any time on that next drop. Mr. Stone went first, and no sooner was he out into the narrow groove of the ravine than a perfect avalanche of snow chunks came whizzing down. Most of them got broken up before they reached him, but every now and then one hung together, as big as a shoveler could lift out of the path, and went whizzing by a mile a minute. One of them bounced up just before it reached him, and landed *ker-blam* against his camera sack, smashing into a thousand pieces, and nearly taking him off his feet.

"The idiots!" Uncle Billy said. "I'd like to throw 'em all down here head first. Go ahead, Dump. Your father's round the bend now."

"You're an easy mark, Dumplin'!" yelled the boys, as poor Lester slid down the rope into the path of the whirling missiles. "Hi! look out—here comes a big one!"

Lester ducked, and a block of snow bounded right over his head. Bennie had no such luck when he started, though. He dodged a couple, but a third chunk caught him right in the head, smashed wetly around his neck and ears, and he felt the water trickling down inside his shirt as he hurried, half blinded, around the rock to shelter. Spider and the doctor soon joined them, Spider nursing a bump on the leg from a snow chunk with a stone in it.

"Great idea of a joke, those guys have," said Bennie. "Funny thing, Dumplin' never got hit at all, and he's the easiest mark. Where do we go from here?"

The doctor looked around. Straight down below them was a long slope of pumice and gravelly looking stuff, at a very steep angle, with a few trees and lava blocks breaking it up, and patches of snow.

"Here," he said, and threw out the rope.

Bennie started first. His feet seemed to hold well in this soft ground, and he let his hand just slide along the rope, seeing how fast he could walk down. Suddenly the ground just slipped away under him. He sat down, and began to slide. His hand, held too loosely on the rope, was yanked off. He grasped for the rope again, but it was out of reach. For one sickly, awful moment, he saw the lake and the rocks hundreds of feet below him, and thought he was going

to land down there—or what was left of him. Down, down he slid, six feet, eight feet, hit a patch of snow and went faster, while he tried vainly to dig in with hands and heels. Then, as suddenly as the first slip, he realized that in ten feet more he'd hit a tree growing on a tiny flat place by a piece of solid lava. A second, and his feet struck the roots with a thump, and he stopped abruptly.

When the rest got to him, he was still sitting there, trembling a little, and trying to clean off his clothes. His uncle's face was white, but all he said was:

"I thought you knew how to climb, Bennie. I see you've got to be taught to keep a hold on the rope."

"It—it came so sudden."

"It always does come sudden," his uncle answered. That was all he said. That was all he ever said about it the whole trip. But it was all he needed to say. Bennie felt deeply ashamed. He had failed on the very first climb! He resolved then and there that the next time he'd hang on to that rope with a death grip.

"Were you scared?" Spider whispered to him, as they got down to the trail where the snow had melted off, and could walk the last few feet of the way. "Gee, I was scared blue when I saw you goin', till I spotted the tree, and knew you were goin' to hit it. Hadn't been there, though, you'd been a goner. Golly!"

"Sure I was scared," said Bennie. "Didn't have time to think much about it, though, before I hit the good old roots."

Dumplin' now dropped alongside.

"If it had been me," he said, "I'd have knocked the tree down, and gone right on."

"You'd 'a' made an awful splash in the lake," Bennie laughed, though his voice still trembled a little.

There were only three boats at the landing, and none of the boatmen had yet come down that day. They were waiting for the trail to be opened. But the hotel manager had told Uncle Billy how to find the oars, and loading the cameras and lunch into a couple of the skiffs, they pushed off, Bennie insisting on rowing one boat, and Lester the other. The lake was very still as they floated out over its blue water.

"It don't look more'n ten feet deep to me," said Bennie, glancing over the side. "There's the old bottom."

"Look up at the cliffs and take ten more strokes, and then look down," said Mr. Stone from the other boat.

Bennie did so.

"Jiminy crickets and little jumping hoptoads!" he exclaimed. "Why, there isn't any bottom!"

Sure enough, the bottom had dropped completely away. They were floating on what seemed like a bottomless blue liquid.

"I feel as if we were sort of hanging in a piece of the sky," said Spider. "I never had such a funny sensation."

The doctor smiled. "You've got the Crater Lake blues," he said. "It scares some people."

"I like it," said Spider. "Gee, it's wonderful!"

Bennie glanced over his shoulder at Wizard Island, which looked about a quarter of a mile away, headed his bow for it, and started to pull again.

"We'll be there in a jiffy," he said.

"How far do you think it is?" his uncle asked.

"'Bout a quarter of a mile."

"It's almost two, in a straight line."

"Gee!" said Bennie.

From the level of the water, Crater Lake was quite a different place. Instead of looking down from the rim, you looked up, and the cliffs that hemmed you in seemed far higher and far steeper. They looked as steep as they really are. The high points around the rim — Garfield Peak, Dutton Cliffs, Llao Rock, Glacier Peak, the Watchman, were all snow-capped, and in many places the snow came down the rim ravines in great white wedges like capital V's, almost to the blue water. The hotel looked like a little Noah's ark.

"Say, if a guy got caught down here and had to go on shore where he couldn't get to the trail, what would he do? Could he climb out?" Bennie asked.

"There's a trail out over there on the east, at that lowest place," said the doctor. "The rim is only 500 feet high there. Those two are the only trails. You might be able to climb out at some other points. A photographer once climbed up under Llao Rock and worked along the base of the lava precipices till he reached the top of the rim. But if I was caught down here in most places, I'd sit tight till a boat came for me."

"You needn't die of thirst, anyhow," Spider laughed.

Slowly Wizard Island drew nearer, and at last Bennie pulled into a little cove, and they hauled the bow up. Lester pulled his skiff in a moment later. Wizard Island, all around the base, seemed to be composed entirely of huge blocks of blackish-brown lava, out of which evergreens mysteriously grew—big, fine trees, too. They scrambled up over these blocks, and soon found a trail winding up the steep slope through the woods. The lava blocks ceased now, and the whole little mountain was composed of a fine material much like cinders from a locomotive. In fact, the baby volcano now resembled nothing so much as a huge cone of cinders, covered with trees. Up and up they toiled, Mr. Stone panting under the weight of his movie camera, and at last reached the summit. Before anybody even looked about, the canteens were unslung and half emptied. Then they looked.

The top of Wizard Island was a perfect circle, like Crater Lake itself, only a tiny circle, two or three hundred feet across. Inside was a crater, about a hundred feet deep, and now filled on the south side, where the sun didn't hit it, with a huge snow-drift pitching steeply down to the bottom.

"Ah! I thought so!" cried Mr. Stone. "Boys, get busy. I'm going to take a movie of you sliding down a crater on the snow. Try it once standing up, and see if you can keep your feet."

The three boys ran out on the drift to the edge, and stepped over. The snow was soft enough so that they



The Boys Sliding down Wizard Island Crater. (Enlarged from a Movie)

sank in a little and pushed enough snow ahead to bank up after ten or a dozen feet. When it did this, it would pitch you head foremost unless you were spry and jumped over the bank in time. The first try all three boys went headlong a quarter of the way down, and made the rest of the trip on their stomachs. They got up and struggled back up the steep incline.

By this time the camera was set up and focussed.

"Good!" said Mr. Stone. "Now get out of the picture a way, and when I say 'Shoot' come walking in to the edge. Stop there a moment and point, as if you were daring each other to go down. Then all slide. Keep your feet if you can. At the bottom, get up quickly, and come scrambling back. Ready? Get on your marks, shoot!"

The three boys came into the picture as the crank ground and the camera clicked. They stopped at the rim, and began to act.

"I dast you to slide down!" said Bennie, forgetting this was a movie, and nobody would hear his voice.

"Ho!" said Dumplin', "that's nothin'."

He tossed off his cap. Spider tossed off his. The three of them stepped over the rim, and shot down. Dumplin' got a third of the way and spilled, head foremost. A second later Spider followed him. Only Bennie got to the bottom on his feet. He yelled and waved his arms in triumph, and all three started scrambling and slipping back up the drift, digging into the snow with heels and hands. As they came up over the rim again, the camera stopped clicking.

"Good," said Mr. Stone. "That's a dandy."

"Some Douglas Fairbanks, eh?" cried Bennie. "Gee, Dumplin', you sure did a comic fall. Bet that would get a laugh on the screen."

"My hands are cold—and I'm sweating," said Lester. "That's going some."

"It's the climate!" came from three mouths at once.

They now walked around the little rim, and on the west side of the island saw, at the base of the cone, a flat space of a few acres, with a tiny little pond in it.

"This is a volcano within a volcano, and that is a lake inside of a lake," the doctor pointed out. "You don't often find that. Now let's eat some lunch, and go down and see if we can catch a fish or two for supper."

They sat, hatless and coatless, in the shade of a little tree beside a snow-drift, and ate their lunch, finishing up the last of the water in the canteens, also. Then they descended to the boats. Mr. Stone mounted his camera in the bow of one boat, with Lester to row, while Spider rowed the other, the doctor sat as passenger, and Bennie got out the collapsible rod his uncle had brought, jointed it, and adjusted the tackle.

"Don't seem fair to fish for trout with a spinner, as if they were nothing but pickerel," he declared. "Wish we had some flies."

"We want the fish to eat," said the doctor, "and Stone wants a picture. We'll use the surest way to get 'em. Now, Spider, row very slowly and just as steadily as you can, just offshore, around the rocks.

Keep an even pace—that's the main thing. If the spinner yanks, the fish get suspicious."

Their boat crept softly along, with the Stones' boat not far behind, Mr. Stone sitting by the camera as if it were a machine gun pointed at them.

Suddenly the line, trailing behind, tightened, Bennie gave a cry, there was a leap and a silver flash in the water astern, and the fight was on!

"Play him, play him!" the doctor shouted. "Keep on rowing, Spider. Give Stone a chance to shoot! Bring him up slowly, Bennie, don't lose him!"

"I won't lose him," Bennie answered grimly. "Gee whiz, what a trout! He pulls like a whale!"

Slowly he reeled in, and then had to play out again, as the fish made a dash past the boat. But the big spinner hook was too much for him, and after three or four minutes he was alongside, giving his last kicks and splashes in the water.

"Swing around, swing around, so the camera can get this!" called the doctor.

As the boat swung, Lester pulled nearer, the camera kept on clicking, and Bennie, reaching over, grabbed the line short and hauled the trout into the boat, holding him up to show his size.

"Some baby!" he cried, breathless with excitement. "He weighs about four pounds. What kind of a trout is he?"

"They put eastern brook trout into this lake," said Uncle Billy. "There were no fish here till it was stocked."

"Eastern brook trout!" Bennie exclaimed. "Well,

that's the funniest looking eastern brook trout *I* ever saw. I guess something happened to 'em."

"It's the climate," Spider chuckled.

"I think it is myself, and no joke," said the doctor. "They are certainly a different fish, both to look at and to eat, than the brook trout we used to catch back home. You catch one now, Spider."

Spider took the line, and caught a trout. Then the doctor got one, and the line was passed to Lester, who lost the spinner in a rock on the bottom, but, with a new hook, caught still a fourth fish.

"That's enough to last us; now for home," came the orders.

"I wonder if they've got the trail cleared yet? Don't much want to face that bombardment again," said Mr. Stone.

"They'll be through digging for the day, anyhow, before we get in," said Uncle Billy.

The long shadows from the western walls were out across the water when they reached the landing and tied up the boats. There was no sign of shovelers on the trail, but no sign, either, that the gang had got to the bottom. They had to make the first half of the climb as best they could, scrambling up the treacherous slopes with the aid of the alpenstocks and the rope which the doctor dragged up ahead and fastened at convenient points. Half-way up, however, they reached the spot where the trail breakers had quit work, and they were glad enough of the path and the easy grade the rest of the way. Their packs were getting heavier and heavier, and the doctor was taking

shifts on the camera, before they finally dragged themselves over the rim, into the sunlight again.

Bennie was carrying the four trout proudly when they passed the hotel, and a crowd came out to see the catch. At least a score more motors had arrived during the day, and the hotel bus was arriving with a load of people. At their camp, they found two new tents pitched close to theirs, the cars bearing California license plates.

"Well, our privacy is gone," sighed Mr. Stone.

"I don't care, if they haven't got a crying child along, to keep us awake," the doctor said.

"Nothing could keep me awake tonight," said Bennie, flopping down on the ground.

"And nothing could wake me tomorrow morning," puffed Lester, flopping down beside him.

"Well, don't go to sleep till you've cleaned those fish for us," Uncle Billy laughed. "And, Dump, you get water, and, Spider, you make the fire."

The smell of boiling coffee and sizzling trout brought new life to everybody. And how they ate! The fish meat was reddish in color, more like salmon than eastern brook trout, but it certainly tasted good, and there was enough for everybody, with potatoes, and bread, and coffee and stewed fruit.

When supper was over and cleared away, and they were sitting around the little camp fire, in their sweaters again, for the evening chill had descended with the sun, a man strolled over from the near-by camp.

"Kind o' cold up here," he remarked.

"Drained your radiator?" Mr. Stone asked.

"No. What you giving us?"

"Just as you like," Mr. Stone replied. "If you like a busted radiator, it's up to you. I don't care."

"You mean to tell me it'll freeze up? Why, it was eighty-eight in the shade in Medford this morning."

"It was probably hotter than that in Los Angeles," said Uncle Billy, with a wink at Mr. Stone.

"No, sir!" the other man retorted. "No siree, Bob. We have the finest climate in Southern California there is in the world. Never too hot, and never too cold."

"It's the climate," chuckled Bennie.

"You bet your life it's the climate, kid," said the man.

"Funny, another man from California once told me the same thing," Mr. Stone smiled. "I'll have to go down there some day and try it."

"You'd better. No place like it."

"What are you doing in Oregon?" Uncle Billy suggested.

"Oh, just taking a look around. Pretty nice little lake here, but you ought to see the Yosemite."

"I've been to Coney Island," Bennie grinned, falling into the game.

"I've seen a picture of Venice by moonlight," said Dumplin'.

"I've been up Bunker Hill Monument. It is 224 feet high," said Spider.

The Californian began to get wise to the fact that he was being guyed, and moved off. They watched him. He went past their cars and glanced at the

ground under the hoods to see if they had really been drained. Then he went over and drained his own.

Mr. Stone laughed. "Push any button on a Californian, and you'll start a record about the finest climate in the world."

"It's the climate," said Bennie, solemnly. "Let's see, where did I see that? Oh, yes, on a big banner across the road in a city down in California."

"A hit, son. I admit it," Mr. Stone answered. "We do a lot of bragging ourselves. At that, we've got a pretty nice climate."

"I move that the next man who says 'climate' has to wash all the dishes for the next three days," said Dumplin'. "All in favor."

A great shout of "Aye!" went up, and on that they turned in.

"Praises be to the man who invented the air mattress," sighed Bennie, as he crawled wearily into his sleeping bag. "Oh, you pneumatic kid!"

"Had enough hard work to satisfy you?" his uncle asked.

"Till about eight A. M. tomorrow," Bennie answered. "Good night, friends. Please tell the bellhop to bring me hot water at 7:30."

CHAPTER XI

Dumplin' Tests the Strength of a Snow Cornice on Garfield Peak

THEIR friend the California camper and his party were up bright and early. At least, they were up early. As Bennie woke up at their noisy shouting, and listened to their conversation, he didn't think they were particularly bright.

"Oh, well, Irvin Cobb couldn't make me laugh at half-past five in the morning," Dumplin' said at breakfast. "I heard 'em, but I went to sleep again. I just stayed awake long enough to hear whether they were talking about their cli—ha! you didn't catch me! —about the atmospheric conditions of California."

"Did they?" his father asked.

"Not's I heard. One of 'em was pulling a merry jest. His idea of a joke, I s'pose. He was throwing cold water on the ones that weren't up."

"Gee, I'd have killed him!" the doctor said. "Maybe they'll be gone by night. Well, what shall we do today? I don't feel like going down to the lake again till the trail is open. It will be done by tonight."

"Let's climb Garfield!"

"Good," said Mr. Stone. "I'd like to get a movie of you all up on that snow cap against the sky."

"And I'm going to gather all the kinds of wild flowers I can, and identify 'em from those mounted

specimens in the hotel," said Spider. "Might's well do some work for a botany honor medal, too."

Bennie was looking up in the tree as Spider spoke.

"Look," he said, "who's your friend?"

"Who are your friends, you mean," added Uncle Billy, also looking up.

Two large birds, fat and sleek, with gray and black plumage were hopping nearer and nearer to the tents, apparently much excited.

"Hello!" cried Spider. "They are new ones on me. Say, aren't they tame!"

Mr. Stone laughed. "Tame is the word. Everybody look the other way, and pretend to pay no attention."

They did so, and suddenly there was a flutter close by, a little peep, a flap of wings, and one of the birds was right down on the box by the stove that served as a kitchen table, and up in the tree again with half a slice of bread in his bill.

"Well, I'll be switched!" Bennie exclaimed. "Can you beat that! What are they?"

"Ever heard of camp robbers?"

"Are *those* camp robbers, eh? Canada jays is another name, isn't it? Well, I thought camp robbers were ugly birds. Those are beautiful."

"They are beautiful, but now they've discovered the camps up here, we'll have to keep everything covered. They can't take a hint worth a cent."

"Let's shoo 'em over to California's camp," laughed Bennie.

Presently they started off for Garfield.

"Hey, Uncle Bill, where's the rope?" Bennie asked.

"Don't need it today."

"Aw, can't we take it along and find a place to use it?"

"Nothing doing. We don't carry any excess baggage out here, son."

The climb up Garfield proved to be an easy one. The trail was clear of snow for half the distance, and the rest of the short thousand feet was over drifts that were neither difficult nor dangerous, till they reached a little flat place a hundred feet short of the summit. Here a sheer precipice confronted them, with the summit snow cap hanging out over it like the cornice of a gigantic house roof.

Mr. Stone set up his camera some distance out from the cliff.

"Now, I want you all to go up there, around on the side, where the trail goes, and come out into view on the left end of the top. Then walk in single file, slowly, along the cornice to the right, and then move back out of sight again. When you get to the top, don't come into view till I yell, 'Shoot!'"

"You mean you want us to walk out on that snow that hangs over the precipice, Pa?" Lester demanded.

"Sure, why not?"

"Well, if it breaks off with our weight, where do we go from there?"

"It won't break. You don't have to get right on the edge of it, of course. But it would hold up a team of horses."

"Yes, but will it hold up Dumplin'?" said Bennie.



The Boys Walking on the Snow Cornice of Garfield Peak. (Enlarged from a Movie)

"Come on, boys, let's get this Pearl White stuff over," the doctor laughed.

They scrambled up around the side to the very peak, and waited till they heard the signal. Then one by one they walked forward toward the edge. The doctor led the way, and sounded with his alpenstock. He stopped five feet short of the extreme edge, however, turned and walked along that line, the rest following him holding their breaths, and half expecting to go pitching down any instant. But they didn't. The snow cornice was many feet thick, and would probably have held up a far greater weight.

When they were out of the picture again, they looked around. The view was tremendous, and the first one they had got from a high summit. (Garfield is a shade over 8,000 feet.) To the south they saw the glistening white snow cone of Mount McLaughlin, and then far, far away, 150 miles, floating almost like a cloud on the horizon, the great white bulk of Mount Shasta in California, more than 14,000 feet high. To the eastward, they looked out over the desert country of southeastern Oregon, stretching for endless miles. North of them, they looked right down for 2,000 feet into the blue caldera of Crater Lake. North of the lake, beyond the farther rim, they could see Mount Thielsen, which looked like a huge needle of lava sticking straight up into the air, and beyond that the white pyramid of Diamond Peak. Everywhere near by, on the outer slopes of the crater, they looked down into dark mysterious forests marching up the ravines.

"Well, Bennie, is this big enough and wild enough for you?" the doctor demanded.

"I never saw so much land all at once in my life," said Bennie, "or such a big hole in it. And to think I've seen old Shasta, way off in California! This beats the old geography!"

"You loosed a larynxful then," came from Dumplin'.

"Not very poetic, Dump, but true," the doctor smiled.

The boys found the steepest drift on the descent, and tried to ski down it on their boot soles, but they hit such a rate of speed that all three of them toppled over, and landed at the bottom head over heels. After they had reached the open trail once more, Spider cut away from the path, and worked down the side slope, through the pumice drifts and the tumbled piles of broken lava, gathering specimens of wild flowers. You would hardly have supposed anything would grow in such unpromising looking soil, but volcanic stuff rapidly breaks up into a soil rich in chemical plant foods, especially potash, and soon his hands were full. Bennie, who had followed him, began to help, and rapidly got interested in the game of finding new varieties. It was a big bunch they finally brought into camp, half an hour after the rest had reached home.

That afternoon Spider took his flowers and a note-book over to the hotel, where a large case of mounted specimens is exhibited, and spent two hours identifying them, and listing the names in his note-book, with

his specimens pressed between the leaves. Bennie bought some candy, and a bunch of post-cards, and scribbled messages to his mother and father and friends. Finally he came over to Spider.

"Gee whiz, you're a studious one," he said. "Wish I was. How do you get that way?"

"I don't know. I just can't help being interested in birds and plants and things like that. You've just got to find something you're awfully interested in, I guess."

"Well, I'm interested in mountains, but that won't get me any merit badge. I'm gettin' kind of interested in supper about now, too. What say we beat it over to camp?"

They walked back along the rim. The snow cap on Garfield was growing pink behind them, and the lake below, ruffled by a little wind, was like a wrinkled carpet of vivid ultramarine blue. The trail, they heard, was now dug out all the way to the landing. Rested by the quiet afternoon, they felt keen for fresh adventures.

"I feel's if I could walk all the way around this old rim," Bennie declared. "You know, there's a motor road runs around it, only it's full of snow now. Has to cut down behind Dutton Cliffs and Garfield, way down to the road we came up on. But the rest of the way round it's up on the rim. Uncle Bill says it's about thirty or thirty-five miles around, he thinks, by the road. Bet you we could do it in a day, right over the old snow. That ought to help toward a merit badge for hiking."

"I'd rather row around the lake at the base of the cliffs," said Spider.

"Well, let's do that tomorrow. Shall we?"

"I guess we'll do what the rest do. Your uncle will have something good on, sure."

"Hope so, I need the exercise," Bennie laughed, plunging across the snow-drift toward the tents.

"Bennie's feeling awful good," Spider told the rest. "Says he's not getting exercise enough."

"The wood-pile is rather low," the doctor remarked quietly.

Bennie saluted. "Yes, sir, thank you, sir!" he said, and picked up his ax.

CHAPTER XII

Bennie Climbs the Mast of the Phantom Ship and Knows He Has Done Something

"SEEING that Bennie is such a glutton for exercise," said Uncle Billy at breakfast the next morning, "what do you say we give him some, Stone?"

"We want to keep him well and happy, surely," Mr. Stone answered, solemnly.

"Yes, we mustn't let the little darling pine," put in Dumplin'.

"Or his mighty muscles get flabby," added Spider.

"You all think you're having a great time, don't you?" Bennie retorted. "Well, I'm all ready. I guess I'll keep in the procession as long as the band plays."

"All right," said his uncle. "Let's get cleared up here, and we'll beat it down the trail and row out to the Phantom Ship. Bennie can row us out and back, and climb the mast between whiles, and then tote your camera, Stone, up the trail again home. Maybe that will restore his lost appetite."

Bennie grinned amiably. "What's the Phantom Ship?" he demanded.

"You'll see."

The boys noted with delight that Uncle Billy was

taking his alpine rope. Lunches and cameras were carried, too. The trail down from the rim was now cleared of snow all the way, and the descent was quick and easy. But, at the bottom, they found that so many people had gone down ahead of them that all the boats were out. They had to wait two hours while some of the boatmen, who had gone across to the boathouse on Wizard Island, got the launch in commission over there, and towed back more boats.

"How did they ever get a launch down here?" asked Bennie.

"Brought it down in pieces and assembled it, I suppose," Spider said. "Didn't they?"

"Must have," answered the doctor.

When the fresh supply of boats arrived, they pushed off, rowing in the opposite direction from Wizard Island. Now they passed directly under the jagged red walls of Eagle Crags, which form the north wall of Mount Garfield, and tower 2,000 feet above the water. Rounding Eagle Point, they saw Chaski Bay, invisible from the hotel, with a great snow-drift hanging over it, and beyond that another 2,000-foot cliff headland, with a long, steep talus slope of soft stuff leading up to the precipitous lava.

"What do you see right at the base of that cliff, in the water?" the doctor asked.

"Nothing," said the boys. "Just some small rocks at the water's edge."

"Some small rocks, eh? Well, row on a bit. Keep in nearer shore, Bennie."

Bennie rowed on another half mile, and again they

looked at the rocks at the water's edge below Dutton Cliff.

"Why," Spider said, "those rocks are out in the water. They're an island."

"That's the Phantom Ship. They call it a phantom because it looks like part of the cliff from a distance. You'll see pretty soon why they call it a ship."

Sure enough, they did see, in a very few moments. For, as the boats drew nearer, the detached rocks were seen to be much larger than they had appeared from a distance, where they had to be measured against the whole 2,000 feet of Dutton Cliff; and not only were they large, but they were really one solid mass of dark brown lava, much more pointed at the end which faced the lake, and with three sharp spires of lava, almost as sharp as an obelisk, sticking up exactly like three masts. To add still further to the illusion of a ship, they saw, as they drew still nearer, that the patches of green on the lava were really pine trees, which now began to look like sails.

"It is just like a ship!" Spider exclaimed. "It's a ship made of lava, a three-master, sailing right out from Dutton Cliff!"

"Is it one of those masts we are going to climb?" Bennie suddenly demanded, a suspicion striking him.

"*You* are—for the exercise," said his uncle.

"Yes, I am! Say, I'm pretty good, but I'm no human fly. Gee, I don't see even a finger-nail hold on 'em."

"Don't get impatient. Look down in the water a minute. Row slowly. Now let her drift."

The boys looked down as the boat floated in toward the dark, straight sides of the Phantom Ship, down into the deep blue water. No bottom was visible, though the sunlight seemed to penetrate a long way down.

Then, suddenly, there was bottom! The bottom seemed to jump up at them, when the boat was about a hundred feet away from the ship. They had floated right on over the rim of a tremendous sunken precipice. Even here the bottom was apparently fifty feet below surface, yet they could see it clearly.

"Stop the boat a minute," Spider said.

Bennie stopped it, and then took his oars out again. Spider, meanwhile, had taken a nickel from his pocket, and when the ripples had died down, he laid it carefully overboard, flat on the water. They watched it wabble and flutter rapidly down, but fast as it went, it was a long time reaching bottom, showing the depth. Yet they could see it plainly after it landed and lay shining on the rocks fifty feet below. Then they watched a big trout swim by, five or six feet under the surface, and they could see every detail of his color, his fins—all through water that was bluer than the sky!

"Now look up at the ship," said Uncle Billy.

It towered above them now like a real ship, a ship 200 feet long, with masts 175 feet tall. Here, on the south side, the walls rose in an almost sheer precipice for many feet, with little clumps of bright flowers growing in the cracks and on the tiny ledges, which Spider instantly coveted for his collection of specimens that was going to help him get a merit badge in botany.

There was one place, however, near the bowsprit, where you could make a landing, and Mr. Stone was already getting out there and setting up his camera. As soon as it was up, he asked the two boats to row around behind the island, and then come into sight again, passing slowly under the side of the ship, so he could show both the boats and the lava cliff. After that he got Spider ashore, and took a movie of him crawling, wherever he could get a finger or toe hold, twenty feet up the ship's side and picking a large clump of pentstemon from a crevice.

"Don't you want to take me and Dumplin' diving off into the water?" Bennie called.

"Sure, if you'll do it," Mr. Stone laughed. "Put your arm down as far in as you can get it first."

Bennie pushed up his sleeve and did so. He pulled his arm out again quickly.

"Thanks, not today," he said.

"The temperature when you get a ways below the surface remains at 39° winter and summer, the scientists have found," the doctor smiled.

"It doesn't feel more'n 29° on top," said Bennie.

When the pictures were taken, they went around to the north side of the island, where the sides were not so steep, and taking the alpine rope, they all landed and scrambled up into the high saddle between the rear and the central mast—"the deck, this ought to be called," they said.

When they got up in here, they found it was possible to climb still higher up the tallest mast (the rear mast), till they reached a sharp, complete crack which sepa-

rated it into two parts. This crack had not been visible from the water.

"It's a regular chimney," Bennie exclaimed. "A chimney open at both sides. Do we go up that?"

"I don't," Dumplin' answered. "I couldn't get into it."

"I don't," said his father. "I wouldn't get into it."

"It's about forty feet from here to the top," said Uncle Billy. "I know a man who climbed it. It took him an hour and fifteen minutes."

Bennie wasn't joking any more. He pulled himself up from the little platform where they were resting till he stood in the crack, and then he felt of the walls of smooth lava, and looked up for hand and foot holds.

"But there aren't any holds," he said. "Hanged if I see how *anybody* can climb up here."

"Oh, you'll find a few holds, if I remember right, places where you can get a sort of apology for a rest," his uncle said, casually.

"Say, are you joshing me or not? Did somebody really climb up here?"

For answer his uncle stepped into the chimney with him.

"This is the way," he said.

He braced his back against one side of the crack by pressing hard with his hands against the other side. Then he raised both his feet free of the ground, while he held himself wedged by sheer muscle, and set his feet against the wall a little way up. Then he pressed so hard with his legs that they wedged him in, and raised his hands, hunching up his shoulders a few inches at

the same time. Again bracing with his arms and shoulders, he got his feet up a few more inches. Then his hands and shoulders again. Progressing in this way, almost crawling, in fact, he was before long so far up in the chimney that Bennie could walk under him. Then, almost as slowly as he went up, he came down.

"You see, it can be done," he said. "I don't say it isn't hard work. But you wanted exercise."

"Give me the rope!" said Bennie, shortly.

"What's the idea of the rope?" asked Lester.

"So the rest of you can get up," Bennie answered.

He tied the rope under his arms, while his uncle held the coil, to play it out. Then he tried his shoes on the wall to see if the nails held, and found they would hold in the lava, where they slipped on granite or other hard rock, and began to work his way up. He worked in silence. Spider and Lester shouted joshing advice at him, advising him to use his teeth, to sit down a while where he was and take a rest, and anything else they could think of, but he was wasting no breath on replies. In fact, he needed all the breath, all the strength and all the attention he had to keep on going. A dozen times he thought he would have to give it up. Once he thought his strength was going to fail him and he would fall. That was when he was about twenty feet from the bottom. But each time he grit his teeth and either seemed to get a kind of second wind, or else found just the faintest hint of a foothold, or a handhold, so he could relieve for a moment the awful tension on his arms and back.

Toward the top, he was literally moving inch by inch, his strength was so far gone. He was just able to get his hands over the rim at last, take a good grip, and hold himself there while his strength came back enough to enable him to pull himself up over the top, and get his weight on to his stomach, where he hung for a full minute, with his legs dangling back into the crack.

Finally he pulled them up, too, and found himself on a tiny little space, hardly large enough to sit on, with the rocks and the lake 175 feet below him. It was like sitting on top of a church spire. Trembling with muscular exhaustion as he was, he didn't care to sit there long. In fact, he took one good look down, had a feeling as if his stomach turned a flipflop, drew up half of the rope and turned it around the top of the spire, and then grasping both strands of the doubled rope, came sliding down the chimney.

His uncle gave him a pat on the shoulder.

"Good work," was all he said, but Bennie knew then that he had really done something.

"Why didn't you wait for us?" Spider demanded.

"Isn't room on top for more'n one at a time," Bennie replied. "Go on up and see what it's like. Keep hold of both strands of the rope, though. How long did it take me?"

"About an hour and twenty minutes," said Mr. Stone.

"Is that all?" said Bennie. "I felt as if it was day after tomorrow before I got there."

And he sat down wearily.

Meanwhile Spider was hauling himself up on the doubled rope. He didn't stay up much longer than Bennie, though.

"Kind o' ticklish up here," he called back. "Glad the wind doesn't blow."

Then he slid down. Nobody else wanted to go up, so the rope was pulled down, and the party descended to the boats again, to eat luncheon, which had been long delayed. Afterwards, they fished for an hour, and got enough trout for a meal.

"Want to row us home, Bennie?" his uncle asked.

"Spider hasn't had a chance to row all day," Bennie answered.

The mile of zigzag trail up from the lake to the rim seemed endless to Bennie that evening, and when the rest went over to the hotel after dinner to hear the music and watch the dancing, he felt like refusing. But he didn't. He went, too, rubbing his eyes to keep them open.

"I guess you'll sleep tonight, eh?" Uncle Billy said, when they finally got back to camp.

"I'm going to sleep so hard I'll puncture the mattress," Bennie answered.

CHAPTER XIII

The Scouts Are Driven Ashore by a Storm and Have to Climb Llao Rock—and They Learn a Lesson

THE next morning the doctor and Spider woke up before Bennie did, and they let him sleep till breakfast was almost ready. When he did get up, he stretched himself and discovered that his muscles were a bit stiff, but otherwise he felt, he said, "like a fighting cock."

"Well, don't feel so good you eat up all the pancakes before I get one!" Dumplin' laughed, snatching for the plate.

"I guess what I need to take the kinks out of my back is exercise," Bennie remarked, with a grin.

"We'd better get hold of Jack Dempsey, and let Bennie box with him every day," Mr. Stone put in.

"Aw, I wouldn't want to hurt him," Bennie answered. "What we going to do today, Uncle Bill?"

"We'll have to think it over," his uncle replied.

But before anything was decided, a bell-boy came from the hotel with the news that someone had been taken sick there, and asking the doctor to come right over. It turned out that a man who had arrived the night before had eaten something on the road that poisoned him, and he was so sick that the doctor didn't

dare go far from camp that day. Mr. Stone wanted to stay near camp also, to make motion pictures of parties climbing up and down the rim, and he needed Lester to help him. So Bennie and Spider asked if they might go down to the water, get a boat, and row across the lake, taking their lunch with them.

"I don't know," the doctor said, frowning. "You can both swim, and you know how to row, but that lake can get pretty rough, and if you're forced to land, there's no way of getting back till somebody can come after you."

"Oh, but look at the old lake! It's calm as a mirror," Bennie pleaded, "and there's not a cloud in the sky."

"We want to see what Llao Rock looks like when you're right under it," Spider added. "We'll be awful careful."

"Will you promise to keep fairly near shore, and if the water gets rough to beat it for home?" the doctor asked.

"Sure we will."

"Well, I oughtn't to let you go. I'm responsible to your parents for you chaps. But, after all, you're big enough to take care of yourselves. All right, but be back at the landing before the sun gets off the middle of the lake. Promise me that?"

The boys promised, and set off down the trail in high spirits, some sandwiches, hastily made, and some sweet chocolate in their pockets for lunch. There were a dozen or more other parties starting down the trail, too, or getting ready to start, so the scouts made

the descent in record time, in order to be sure of getting a boat.

Once out on the water, they decided it would be too much of a pull to try to circle the entire lake, under the cliffs—a matter of about twenty miles or more. But they could pull straight for the grotto on the east side of the lake, beyond the Phantom Ship, a matter of five miles, then cut across to Llao Rock, about four and a half miles, and then four miles home.

"Sure we can row that," said Bennie. "That's only thirteen and a half miles. Call it thirteen, 'cause we won't land, probably, at Llao."

"Sure," answered Spider. "Easy."

Well, it was easy to the grotto, which they finally found by rowing along the edge of the cliffs. The grotto is simply a shallow cave, only a few feet up from the water, but once you are in it you look out on the blue lake, through the opening, as if you were looking through a big window. The boys ate their lunch in here, and then started directly across for Llao Rock.

But the very first thing that they noticed was that the wind had come up, blowing directly against them, and with the wind a chop of water, which went slap, slap, slap under their bow. They pulled hard, and made slow progress.

About half-way across, Bennie, who was rowing, said, "You pull a while, Spider. I'm through for a bit."

Spider took the oars and tugged. The wind and waves were certainly rising. They were slapping the bow hard now, and swinging around so that the rower

was half the time tugging at one oar or the other to keep his course.

"You know what your uncle said," Spider panted. "Strikes me we're a long way from shore, and this old lake is kicking up a sea. I think we better turn with the wind, and beat it back to the other shore, and then make for home."

"We got to make for home, all right," Bennie answered, his face getting white as he looked first at the waves and then up at what were unmistakably gathering clouds over the rim. "But if we go back to that east shore we get the full force of the sea, 'cause the wind is west. If we get in under the west side, we'll be out of the wind, in shelter. Then we can run for home that way."

"There's something in that," Spider assented. "If we can get there."

"We *got* to get there," Bennie cried. "Look at that old black cloud up there."

Spider took one look, and began to pull for all he was worth.

It was dangerous business changing places in that sea, but finally he had to give up to Bennie again.

"Look out for those oars!" Bennie shouted. "We'd be goners if we lost one of them. We got to make shore, and wait till this is over. Oh gee!"

This last exclamation was caused by a wave that hit the boat almost broadside, drenching both boys to the knees and putting an inch of water on the bottom.

Bennie got hold of the oars, headed the boat into the sea again, and Spider began to bail with his cap.

Wave after wave now hit their bow, and came spraying over, soaking them. There were whitecaps all around. The sun had disappeared behind the dark cloud, and the wind seemed rising steadily. Bennie pulled with every ounce of strength he had, and Spider bailed madly. Slowly, very slowly, almost as if they were standing still, Llao Rock drew near. They had to make the dangerous change once more, when Bennie's strength gave out, and once more the boat swung broadside, and shipped a dangerous quantity of water.

"If she'll only stay afloat till we make the shore!" Bennie cried. "Gee, it don't seem to be a bit calmer over here."

"If it is, I'm glad we ain't out there," Spider panted as he tugged at the oars.

In spite of all he could do, with only his cap to bail with, the boat was perilously full of water before the great lava precipices of Llao Rock finally towered right above them, and they saw and heard the waves on the stony shore.

"How are we going to land without smashing the boat?" Spider puffed.

"Hang the boat! How are we going to land without smashing our heads?" Bennie answered. "Hold her right inshore, and when I see a place pull for all you've got left!"

"Pull!" he yelled a moment later.

Spider drove the boat in. A wave caught it and threw it forward, but the bow drove between two lava fragments which rested half in water, half on shore, and while Bennie grabbed one oar and pushed at the

stern, Spider jumped from the bow with the painter in his hand. He landed on a stone at the water's edge, slipped back above his waist, scrambled out dripping wet, hauled on the painter, and got the bow in close. Bennie got out, and between them they hauled the boat up where the waves couldn't knock it free, and tipped her over to let the water run out.

Then they both sat down and panted.

"Well, I'd rather be here than out there," Bennie finally said.

"I don't mind saying I didn't know whether we'd ever get here," Spider answered. "I guess that was a close call, all right. Gee, but my arms ache!"

"Mine don't—they haven't any feeling left in 'em," said Bennie. "Well, what are we going to do now? We can't stay here all night and freeze to death."

"I sure am wet and cold," Spider answered. "And you can't make a fire out of lava and pumice. Funny thing, not a drop of rain has fallen. Look, there's the sun again over on the top of Scott."

"No more sun here, though," Bennie said, looking up the 800 foot sharp slope of pumice above them, that ended at the 1,200 foot absolutely precipitous and terrifying leap of Llao Rock. "We're under the shadow of that old rock."

"Well, we'll just have to hop round and keep as warm as we can, till the old lake quiets down and we can row home."

"She don't show any signs of quieting down," said Bennie. "Hear the old wind. 'Sides, it'll take a long while for those waves to quit. And I don't want to go

out on that water again! Gee, I couldn't row a hundred feet."

"We could if we had to," said Spider, bravely. "Anyhow, probably your uncle will send the launch out after us."

"They don't know where we are, and we can't make a fire to signal."

"They'll have field-glasses," Spider suggested. "We can wave our handkerchiefs."

"'Sides," Bennie went on, "maybe the launch is out, too, and it'll be dark before they can get here, and maybe they won't come across in this sea. I'll be frozen stiff by that time. I move we climb up to the rim road and walk home. It's only eight miles from Llao Rock to camp, according to the map."

"Climb up!" exclaimed Spider, looking aloft at the terrific precipice. "This has gone to your head, Bennie."

"You poor fish, we wouldn't climb the rock itself," Bennie answered. "Don't you remember, Uncle Billy said somebody worked up to the base, and then along on top of the pumice slope to the rim? If somebody else did it, we can do it. If we see the launch coming after we get up a ways we can come down. Anyhow, it's better'n freezing to death here. It'll keep us warm."

"Looks to me like an awful job," Spider objected.

"Well, you can stay here then, *I'm* going," Bennie declared. His voice was shrill, and Spider realized that he wasn't quite himself. Besides, he was shivering with cold. Spider was shivering, too, here in the

gloomy shadow of Llao Rock, with the wind beating upon them.

"All right," he decided, "if you go, I go. Come on. We got to hit the rim road before dark. But take it easy, Bennie, for Pete's sake. We got to save our strength, and this old stuff's awful treacherous, too. Test your footing."

"I'll test my footing, all right," Bennie answered, starting up the long, steep incline of powdered pumice and loose conglomerate, out of which here and there thrust up jagged lumps and spikes and little cliffs of harder lava.

It was hard work, all the harder because they were so wet and tired. And they soon found it was dangerous work. Drive your foot down into the soft stuff too hard to get a brace, and you start a little landslide right under your own feet. That releases a lot of stuff above you, which starts down, too, and it is only too easy to get carried down with the rush. The boys found this out, fortunately, before they had climbed very far, so that they didn't slide far enough to hurt them. After that, they climbed side by side, ten feet apart, instead of one behind the other, and zigzagged across the slopes, instead of going directly up.

It seemed ages before they reached the top of the loose stuff, at the very base of the mighty precipice. From here they could see the whole lake, and scanned the water for any sign of the launch, but no launch was to be seen. So they kept on.

Their troubles, which they thought would be over when they reached the base of the cliff, were not over.

They still had a long, soft slope to climb at the foot of the lava, which was impeded by huge broken fragments fallen from the cliff above. Often they couldn't go around these, because if they did they got too near the edge of the slope, and were in danger of starting down on a landslide. They had to work over them. However, they toiled on, getting warm, at least, with the exertion, until they reached the long and almost level stretch that led rapidly to the rim.

Here, for the first time in ten minutes, Bennie spoke. "We're going to make it!" he cried.

"And we're going to make it before dark!" Spider answered.

They hurried on now, with renewed courage, and gained the rim at last, coming up out of the cold shadows into the sharp mountain gale and the last low rays of sunset.

Both boys flopped for a minute on the dry pumice back from the rim, and lay there getting back some of their strength.

Spider was the first up. "Come," he said, "we got to find the rim road before it's dark."

"Eight miles!" Bennie sighed. "Oh, you automobile!"

"Come on—no use crying for automobiles. We got to find that road and hoof it. We can't stay out all night in these wet clothes, without any blankets."

Bennie got up wearily. "All right. The old road'll be pretty close. All we got to do is walk down the back slope, away from the rim."

"But it's all snow," said Spider. "How'll we know the road when we see it?"

"If we can't tell a road when we come to it, snow or no snow, we're bum scouts and deserve to stay here and freeze to death," Bennie retorted.

As a matter of fact, in spite of the snow, they did find the road, by catching at a distance a cut through trees, and then by picking up a long open space bare of snow, which the road crossed, showing plainly. Once on it, the chance of missing it again was not great unless the night got very dark. With bright starlight, even without a moon, the tired scouts, as they plodded along, now for brief welcome stretches on the bare ground, but mostly on the soft drifts where every step was an effort, reckoned they could keep the trail.

"Besides," Bennie said, "if we lost it, we could always sort of follow the rim."

"Yes, and have to climb up over the top of the Watchman and Glacier Peak. No, thanks. I've climbed enough today. It'll be in woods a lot of the way, and we can always feel the opening. You know how we can follow a wood road at home in the dark."

"Oh, you home!" sighed Bennie. "Think of bacon, and coffee, and baked potatoes! Oh, boy, I'm going to cry in a minute, I'm so empty."

"Take up a hole in your belt, like the Indians," Spider suggested.

It was getting dark now rapidly, and they were plodding wearily across a long opening on the heavy snow, which was like walking on a pile of rock salt,

and wondering where the road was on the other side, when suddenly Spider stopped.

"Look!" he cried.

"What is it? I don't see anything."

"Look, in the trees. I saw a light!"

"How do you get that way?" Bennie demanded. "Light! We're about six miles from nowhere here. Haven't any campers been around the rim road. Can't get around. Buck up, Spider. Don't cave now!"

"Oh, quit," said Spider crossly. "There! There it is again!"

This time Bennie saw it. There *was* a light in the woods ahead of them. Moreover, it wasn't a camp fire. It was moving.

"Somebody with a lantern!" Bennie exclaimed. He stuck two fingers into his mouth and blew a long, shrill blast.

The answer was a "Hoo-oo!" in Uncle Billy's voice!

"How'd they know we were here?" said Bennie, as they both shouted back, and stumbled on more rapidly toward the light.

A moment later they were beside Uncle Billy and Mr. Stone, and out of his pack Uncle Billy was taking a thermos bottle of hot tea, and the boys were drinking it. Around his shoulder, they saw, the doctor had his alpine rope.

"I guess that doesn't go to the spot!" Bennie exclaimed.

"Never knew tea was so good," said Spider.

And now followed rapid questions and answers, as

the tramp to camp was resumed. No trouble about finding the road now! They had a lantern, and the back tracks of Uncle Billy and Mr. Stone.

"How'd you know where we were?" the boys demanded.

"Watched you with a glass," said the doctor. "I saw the lake getting rough, after you started across, and I saw that cloud coming. Stone went down the trail to send the launch for you, but the launch was out with a party. Finally it got in under the lee of Wizard Island, and everybody tried to signal it to come across, but it didn't come, and finally somebody rowed over from it and reported the engine had gone dead and they couldn't start it. They're bringing the passengers back now, when the lake's got quieter.

"By that time, we'd seen you land at Llao Rock, so we planned to row over and get you just as soon as we could, if they didn't get the launch started up. But then you began to climb."

The doctor paused.

"Well," he finally went on, "I had a bad five minutes then, I can tell you. But there was nothing to do about it, so we watched to make sure you were really going to try to make the rim, and then we beat it over here. You made better time up than I thought you could. We expected to get to the rock before you got up. I brought the rope to—to help you."

"Why did you keep on into the wind?" Mr. Stone asked. "Why didn't you turn back and run with it to the east shore where you came from?"

The boys explained how they thought they were

going to get out of the wind under the protection of Llao Rock.

"There's no protection on that lake in a storm," the doctor said. "Fortunately, there aren't many storms. I told you to keep near shore, though, and you crossed right over. Well, never mind that now. Guess you've had your lesson."

"Guess we have," said Bennie, as he stumbled wearily along, hardly able to drag one foot after the other. "But we thought we were pretty near the north shore when we crossed. Only to get there, we'd have to go broadside, and besides, it was taking us away from camp."

"Still," said his uncle, quietly, "you didn't quite live up to your promise, did you?"

"No, sir," Bennie admitted. "It won't happen again, Uncle Billy."

The six miles back to camp turned out to be seven. It seemed to the boys that they would never get there. But at last they did. Dumplin' had a roaring fire going, both in the stove and the camp fire ring of stones. Coffee was ready to boil, and bacon to fry. He had eggs, too, bought from the hotel.

The scouts fell into their tent and ripped off their clothes, getting a rub-down before putting on dry ones. By the time they were ready, their dinner was cooked, and they came out to the table, dragging their feet wearily, and slumped down on the camp chairs.

"Good old Dumplin'!" said Bennie, as he waded into the food, "I never loved you so much as I do at this minute."

"P'r'aps you'd like to kiss him," Spider suggested, also cheering up as he felt the warmth of the food.

"No, I'm not strong enough yet to do that," Bennie laughed.

"You never will be!" Dumplin' retorted, filling his plate again.

After their supper the boys hung their wet clothes by the camp fire, and huddled by it themselves for a while, but Uncle Billy soon ordered them to bed, and they didn't need to be told twice.

The doctor came into the tent after they had crawled into the grateful, warm blankets on the comfortable air cushions of their sleeping bags.

"All right?" he asked.

"Uncle Bill," said Bennie, "it was my fault we crossed the lake. Spider didn't have a thing to do with planning the trip."

"No, we were both to blame," put in Spider. "We knew we couldn't row all around the lake, and we wanted to see the grotto and Llao Rock both, so we cut across. I—I guess we didn't really think."

"We won't say anything more about it," the doctor answered. "It's come out all right. But maybe next time you'll believe that I know more about this country than you do, and when I ask for a promise, it isn't just an old maid's fancy."

"Yes, sir," they both answered.

When he had gone out, Spider whispered across the tent, "He's a peach, your uncle. Gee, he didn't bawl us out a bit."

"Made me more ashamed than if he had," Bennie replied.

"Me, too."

"I guess we gave him a bad time of it, worrying about us. I guess we deserved to get ours."

"Well, we got it, all right."

"Kid, you've enunciated a history full!" Bennie answered. "We're bum scouts. Never again."

"Never again," echoed Spider.

They were sound asleep when Uncle Billy returned from a last call on his patient at the hotel and went to bed.

CHAPTER XIV

Bennie Takes a Day Off to Do a Good Turn—He Washes All the Dirty Clothes

THE next day neither of the scouts felt much like strenuous exertion. Their arms ached from pulling the boat, and they both had blisters on their hands, and the excitement had left them rather tired.

Mr. Stone looked at them while they were eating breakfast.

"Well, Bennie," he said, "what are you and Spider going to do today? I can't seem to think of anything left around here that will give you as much exercise as you want. Of course, you haven't yet run all the way down the trail and run all the way back again. You might try that. Or you might row to Llao Rock and tow your other boat home, before the launch has to go for it."

"Naw, that's too easy," Bennie grinned. "I kind of thought we might hike around the rim road. How far is it—forty miles? We'd be back in time for dinner."

"A good idea!" Uncle Billy exclaimed.

"What's a good idea?" asked Bennie, beginning to be sorry he'd made the joke.

"A hike," said the doctor.

Spider and Bennie groaned.

"Not today!" the doctor laughed. "Tomorrow, maybe. We haven't had a real hike yet, and I heard you talking the other day, didn't I, Bennie, about wanting to work for a merit badge in hiking?"

"Where'll we hike to—how far?" put in Dumplin'. "Look at those two lovely automobiles, just doing nothing. Don't seem right to me to let 'em loaf so."

"Well, you can stay back in camp, and have the wood all cut and the dinner cooked for us when we get back," said his father.

"Yes, I will!" Dumplin' retorted. "I may be fat——"

"It's just possible," put in Bennie.

"I may be fat, but I can keep goin' as long as any of you, I guess!"

"You may not be so fat when we get back," Uncle Billy went on. "I think it would be a great idea to give Bennie some regular exercise, about tomorrow, also the day after, and the day after that. We'll hike over to the base of Mount Scott, because that's the highest point around here, packing our blankets and grub. Then the second day we'll climb Scott, and the third day we'll hike back again."

"Ho, that's no hike at all, if you take three days for it!" Bennie said. "I been looking on the map. It's less 'n ten miles from here to the top of the mountain, and the top is only 8,938 feet high, so it's only a 2,000-foot climb."

"How much better you know this country than I do," said his uncle, quietly, "and how skilfully you can

read the contour intervals on a map. Well, you may go over and back the same day, if you want to. The rest of us will take three, however."

Bennie turned red. "I—I guess I'm a dumb-bell," he stammered.

"It's just possible," Dumplin' put in, while the rest shouted with mirth at the hit.

Spider, meanwhile, had gone to his pack and got out the government topographical survey map of Crater Lake Park.

"Do we go along the rim?" he asked.

"More or less. We'll have to climb part way up Garfield, and then find a way down on the other side, and work along back of Dutton Cliff to Kerr Valley."

Spider was studying the contour interval lines of the map closely now.

"Let's see, we go up at least 500 feet for a start, and then we go along a mile or two, and then we—holy mackerel!—then we drop right down 'most a thousand! And then ——"

"Yes?" said Bennie.

"And then we go up again 'most a thousand, and then we walk a mile, and then—jumping bullfrogs and little fish hooks!—then we just fall down, let's see, about a thousand feet into Kerr Valley. That's less than 6,500 feet above the sea. Scott is almost 9,000. We've still got a climb of 2,500 feet ahead of us."

"Aw, go on, you're making that up," Bennie insisted. "You can't tell all that from the map. Let me look."

"Maybe *you* can't tell," Spider retorted. "I al-

ways told you you didn't half read a map. Go on—look for yourself."

And he passed the map over.

Bennie studied it carefully. "I guess maybe you're right," he finally confessed. "Well, exercise is just what I need! How's the path, Uncle Bill?"

"Path!" the doctor laughed. "You'll cross the rim road at the bottom of Kerr Valley, where it comes down from the rim to get around the cliffs back to the hotel here. But that's the only path you'll see. This is going to be a hike, not a Sunday School picnic or a young ladies' seminary out for a walk."

"Suits me fine."

"Good!" said his uncle. "I advise you to rest up for it today, though."

"I know what I'm going to do today, all right. Anybody got any dirty clothes?"

"I haven't got much else," said Dumplin'.

"Fine. Bring 'em out, all of you. Mrs. Murphy's on the job this morning. I'm going to wash things up."

"Want me to help?" Dumplin' asked.

"No, you go off with Spider and collect pretty little flowers. Don't let 'em bite you, though. They're wild flowers, remember."

Everybody groaned at this pun.

"Mrs. Noah threw a belaying pin at her husband for making that one on the ark," said Uncle Billy.

"What's the difference," Bennie began, "between Noah's ark and Joan of Arc?"

But everybody dove, with another groan, into the tents, to get their dirty clothes.

When everybody but Bennie had gone from camp, he heated a big pail of water, got out a cake of soap, and washed all the dirty clothes, hanging them on a tent rope in the sun to dry. Then he picked up camp as neat as he could, aired all the bedding and remade the sleeping bags, and finally went off and hunted up dead branches for fuel, dragging them back to camp. After lunch, while the rest were loafing, he took the fishing rod and sneaked away unseen, went rapidly down the trail, and working around on the rocks by the shore, managed to hook three trout. He was just coming up over the rim with them when Spider and Lester, wondering at his long absence, had started out to look for him.

"I sure hate a man who pins roses on himself," Bennie remarked, as he was cleaning the fish for dinner, "but I just can't help admitting that I've been mamma's little white-haired boy today. I've washed all your dirty shirts and socks, and I've got wood, and I've cleaned up camp, and now I've dragged my poor old aching bones down a thousand feet and back again to catch you three sweet little fishie-wishies for supper. Won't somebody please say 'Thank you, Bennie, you are a good boy'?"

"Bennie doesn't like himself a bit, does he?" remarked Dumplin', addressing a camp robber in a tree overhead.

"Can't you prescribe something for his poor old aching bones, Doc?" asked Mr. Stone.

"Try rubbing 'em with a little fish oil, Bennie," Spider put in.

"I think I shall prescribe exercise," Uncle Billy laughed.

"Well, of all the ungrateful bunches, you sure get the loving cup!" Bennie exclaimed. "I hope you all choke on a fish bone."

"The Bible says virtue is its own reward, Bennie," remarked Mr. Stone.

"Pretty skinny pickings for some of you guys, then," Bennie grinned.

But after supper Uncle Billy strolled out with Bennie to the point of Victory Rock, to see the lake like a great blue mirror in the twilight, and he said, quietly:

"We were all much obliged to you for what you did today. Never mind the joshing."

Bennie laughed. "Ho! I didn't mind. Can't get my goat so easy as that! Besides, the old Bible is right, I guess. You don't do a good turn because you're going to be thanked for it. You do it 'cause it makes you feel better inside."

"That's the idea, exactly," Uncle Billy answered. "Bennie, you're a good scout. Your heart is just where it ought to be every time. The only trouble with you is that you haven't quite got your head working yet. If you are going to amount to anything as a mountaineer or explorer—anywhere in the wilderness—you've got to learn to use your head, and never bite off more than you can chew. Will you try to remember that?"

"I sure will, Uncle Bill," Bennie answered. "I'm

awful fresh, I guess, and I talk a lot, but I'm learning right now, every day. You just sit on me hard when I need it."

"You needn't worry about my doing *that*," the doctor grinned.

"No, you're some sitter," said Bennie.

CHAPTER XV

The Long Hike—The Scouts Find Packing Grub and Blanket Rolls Up and Down Cliffs is Hard Work

BRIGHT and early the next morning preparations for the hike began. This was to be no ordinary jaunt. They were going out for three days and two nights into a wilderness, where they would have to make long, severe climbs up and down treacherous lava ledges; where they would have to sleep out in the open, tentless, in a climate where water freezes at night; where they couldn't get a mouthful of food except what they could carry with them.

"You see, boys," said the doctor, "it's going to be quite a problem how to take along enough stuff to keep us warm, and keep us fed, and yet be able to travel with it on our backs."

Each member of the party put in his shoulder pack his own food ration, consisting of tea (because it is lighter than coffee), some bacon, powdered egg, a little dehydrated vegetables, a small bag of flour, a small bag of sugar, a package of bouillon cubes, a can of preserved fruit, a small can of condensed milk, two pounds of raisins, two boiled potatoes, and several cakes of sweet chocolate. In addition, each person

put in two extra pairs of wool socks, and a set of underclothes. Then, out of their sleeping bags, they each took a double blanket, and made a blanket roll, fastening the ends with straps from the motors. Bennie and Spider each had a boy scout individual cook-kit, in a khaki case with a shoulder strap. These two kits, with a tin cup and plate and spoon for the others, and one larger frying-pan and kettle carried by Uncle Billy, was all the cooking outfit they carried. However, the doctor made everybody carry a canteen, and Bennie, Spider and Mr. Stone each carried a camera. Everybody had a sweater, also, and two belt axes were taken. The doctor had his rope.

When the shoulder packs were on, and the blanket rolls, and the canteens, and the cameras and camp kits, everybody was glad enough of the alpenstocks which the doctor handed around.

"Say, I need this stock to help me stand up," said Dumplin'. "I feel like a walking department store."

"I'll bet we aren't toting any more than a soldier has to carry on a march, at that," said Spider. "Are we, doctor?"

"No, I don't believe we're packing so much," Uncle Billy answered. "A gun's heavier than a stock, too. But it's enough. Going to be hot today."

As the little procession filed past the hotel (which by now was full of tourists), a crowd came out to watch them go past.

"Going on a hike, boys?" somebody called out.

"No," Bennie answered, "we're going over to Wizard Island to play tennis."

"Wonder what makes people ask foolish questions?" Dumplin' mused.

"It's the ——" Bennie began. Then he caught himself. "Ha! thought you had me, didn't you?—it's the altitude!"

"You chaps won't talk so much at three o'clock," remarked Mr. Stone.

For the first half mile, they had a trail, the trail they had already taken up Garfield Peak. But halfway up, they left the trail, and struck right out, without any path at all, around the tumbled crags of broken lava, and over the snow-fields and patches of soft pumice soil that crown this part of the rim on the southeastern side of the lake. The going was very slow and difficult, up hill and down, in and out among the rises and dips, with the sun beating down upon them till their packs and hot blankets seemed almost unbearable. At first, they could see the blue lake almost 2,000 feet below them, while they worked along the crest of Eagle Crags, but after a while they had to drop down behind the rim to avoid a climb up Dyar Rock, and lost all sight of it.

After about two miles, they came out on the crest of a slope that led down to Sun Creek, and saw the Sun meadows below them. They would have rejoiced at this sight if they hadn't also seen the wall of the deep ravine rising up on the other side, steeper and higher than under their feet.

"Oh, for the wings of a dove!" sighed Dumplin'.

"Lot o' good a dove's wings would do *you*," said Bennie. "Take a dirigible to lift you."

"A bridge across would do me," said Spider.

"Meanwhile, we'll get a little exercise crossing on our own feet," Uncle Billy smiled. "Come on, now, and watch your step. Sound your footing with your alpenstocks, and keep out of line, so if anybody starts a slide, it won't spill all the rest."

They made the descent slowly and painfully over the first steep pitches, and then more rapidly till they sank at last on the ground by the water of Sun Creek, which came down from a snow-bank up on the rim at the head of the ravine, threw off packs and blankets, and plunged their mouths in.

"Do we lunch here? I'm hungry ——" from Dumplin'.

"We do," the doctor answered. "And it's a brief lunch, too. Everybody take one handful of raisins, and half a cake of chocolate."

"Oh, gee, is *that* all?" cried Dumplin'.

"That's all. John Muir used to climb for two or three days in the high Sierras on a pocketful of raisins, and didn't even carry a blanket. Come on, get busy."

Everybody obeyed, and the doctor saw to it that they didn't take too many of their raisin supply, either.

"I consider this a Lucullan feast," remarked Mr. Stone.

"Whatever that is," said Bennie. "If you mean some banquet, I'm right along with you. Always did like these seven-course dinners."

"Anyhow, it won't take long to wash the dishes," Spider reflected.

As soon as the raisins and chocolate were eaten, and the canteens refilled, they picked up their packs and blankets again and put them on.

"Gosh! mine weighs more'n it did," said Bennie. "Somebody's put something into it."

"Mine, too."

"Mine, too."

"Mine, too."

"Wait till they get really heavy before you kick," said Uncle Billy. "Forward, march!"

The thousand-foot wall of the Sun Creek ravine which faced them was just about the height from the lake to the rim at the hotel, but it was not so steep, except for a little distance at the start. On the other hand, there was no trail at all, no sign that any other human being had ever been up it, and when the going was not amid treacherous lava fragments which broke if you put your weight on them, it was over soft pumice into which your feet sank deep, and then began to slide backwards. Finally Bennie took his uncle's rope and scrambled up ahead with it, till he could find anchorage, so the rest could have its help. When he was fagged, somebody else took a turn. It took them more than an hour to make the half mile up the wall, and at the top they pitched off their packs and blankets, their shoulders and backs dripping wet with perspiration, and everybody set his mouth to his canteen and drank.

After a rest, they crossed Dutton ridge, a mile of broken going, and then began to descend into the next ravine, called Kerr Valley, which is the deepest ravine

on the slopes of old Mount Mazama, and lies right at the foot of Scott Peak. The descent was not dangerously steep till the last three hundred feet, and there they used the rope again to help them.

As they came out at last into the mile wide ravine of Kerr Valley, out of which the snow had pretty well melted except under the trees, and in which the wild flowers were springing up, they saw where the rim road came down from the rim and descended the valley to get around the mass of ledges and ravines they had been crossing. It was now three o'clock, and, as Mr. Stone had predicted, nobody was saying much.

They could see the round, dome-like pile of Scott's Peak, directly across the valley, and Bennie did ask how far it was from there to the top.

"Thinking of keeping on up today?" his uncle asked.

"Aw, don't rub it in," said Bennie. "I couldn't climb an ant-hill now."

"Well, a mile more will take us across the valley to water," his uncle laughed. "Guess we can all stick that out."

On the other side of the valley, across the still deserted and useless rim road, they found a stream, called Sand Creek, which came down, the doctor said, from a spring on the cliffs of Scott, just above them.

Here they dumped their packs again, stripped off their clothes, and the three boys were only restrained by main force from falling in.

"You're too hot to go in that ice water," the doctor said, grabbing Bennie. "Wash your feet all you want to, and splash yourselves."

After the wash, they put on their dry underclothes, and spread the other set in the sun (which was fast dropping down the west), and then set about making camp.

"I say we find a straight-faced rock to build the fire against," Bennie suggested, "so it will throw the heat all one way, and we can sleep around it in a half circle, out of the wind."

"I move we find a place where the ground is dry and a snow-drift hasn't just melted off it," added Spider.

"And where it's nice and soft," added Dumplin'.

"And where it's near wood," added Mr. Stone.

"Maybe you'd like a room with a bath, and have your breakfast brought up to you," Uncle Billy laughed. "Well, go to it. Find your rock, Bennie. Whoever's got the axes, cut wood, and lots of it."

A smooth place was finally found in the lee of a block of lava, some little way from the stream, but near a patch of firs and hemlocks, where there was plenty of dead wood. Dumplin' started stoning up a big fireplace, while the two scouts chopped wood and Mr. Stone brought water in the big kettle and two little kettles of the camp kits and in the canteens, and the doctor mixed a pancake batter, and made the bacon and egg powder ready to cook, and peeled one of the two potatoes in each pack.

As the sun dropped down behind the high ridge to the west, a chill almost immediately came into the air. In less than an hour everybody, who had been so hot all day, was thinking about putting on his sweater. But the fire burned brightly, the potatoes smelled delicious in the frying-pan, and as soon as they were done, the smell of bacon and eggs rose from the same pan. Water for bouillon tablets and tea boiled in the kettles. The food disappeared down hungry mouths, and every plate was scraped clean, ready for the pancakes to follow. They had no syrup to eat on the cakes, but nobody seemed to mind that. After the cakes, they drew lots to see whose can of fruit should be opened, because the lucky one would have so much less to carry in his pack. Dumplin' won, to his delight. His can was peaches, and how good they tasted—after the can was finally pried open, with the aid of a scout ax, a stone and a broken jack-knife blade!

Then the dishes were washed, more wood heaped on the fire, sweaters donned, and in the gathering darkness, and the utter silence of the wilderness, the five hikers sat in a close ring before the fire, and relaxed their weary muscles.

"Well, I'm glad I lugged that grub," said Bennie. "'Bout three o'clock, though, I would have dumped the whole pack over the rim for two cents."

"Me, too," said Dumplin'. "Gosh, this hiking is hard work! Don't see much adventure in it. Here we've come about eight or nine miles, and took us all day, and nothin' happened."

"What did you expect to happen?" his father asked. "Expect to meet an elephant, or have the mountain erupt?"

"Gee, *I* think it's a wonderful adventure!" Spider exclaimed. "It's been a kind of *battle*. I—I can't say what I mean, but it was just the same when Bennie and I were getting up Llao Rock. We were sort of *fighting* up. Only instead of fighting another man, who tries to hit you back, you are fighting just—just—well, just the wilderness."

"And it's against you all the time," said Mr. Stone.

Bennie had grown very thoughtful. "No, it's *not* against you all the time," he said. "Excuse me for contradicting, Mr. Stone. I don't mean to be fresh. But the way I feel is that it's against you if you don't know how to meet it, but if you do know, it is always kind of putting out things to help you."

"Such as ——?" asked his uncle.

"Well, such as dead wood for a fire, and a chimney to crawl up in, if you know how, when you strike a precipice, and maybe food to eat. I bet we could find food in the roots of some of these wild flowers, if we had to."

"Give me bacon," said Dumplin'.

"Gee, Dump, you go to church behind your belt buckle," said Bennie scornfully. "But I'm with Spider, though, that a hike like this is a regular adventure, 'cause it's a sort of fight all the way, and it's all up to you whether you get through or not. Gee, I wish I was an explorer!"

Uncle Billy smiled. "We may get a little exploring

yet, before we get back to Portland. You never can tell. Well, who's going to sleep tonight?"

"I guess we all are."

"Till the cold wakes us up," said Mr. Stone.

"And a rock grows up through our shoulder blades," said Spider.

"Whenever that happens, put some more wood on the fire," said Uncle Billy.

Then everybody rolled up in his blanket, feet to the fire, with his pack for a pillow, and in spite of the bare ground, in place of a nice air mattress, was soon asleep.

CHAPTER XVI

The Climb Up Scott Peak—Bennie Begins Work for a Merit Badge for Hiking

BUT the night wasn't very old before everybody had discovered that there is a big difference between sleeping on an air mattress, inside four or five blankets in a sleeping bag, under a tent, and sleeping on the bare ground, in one blanket. Bennie and Spider had slept on the bare ground, to be sure, many a time on their scout hikes at home, but that was always in summer, when it was warm. To be sure, it was summer now, but they were more than 6,000 feet up, on the crest of the Cascades, with snow all around them.

It seemed to Bennie as if he had been asleep only fifteen minutes, when he was waked up by cold. He didn't fully wake up at first, but only just enough to feel the wind getting down around his neck, and to feel his whole body stiff and uncomfortable. He yanked the blanket tighter around him, and tried to go to sleep again. But, instead, he woke up still more.

At last he was awake enough to prop himself up on one elbow, and look at the fire. It had burned down to a few glowing embers in the stone pit against the lava block. Overhead the stars were extremely bright, but the night itself seemed dark. There wasn't

a sound in the world. Yes! Hark! Bennie's ears grew alert in the darkness. Far off he heard a roar, starting low, then growing louder, then dying away. At first he couldn't understand it; then he realized it was a landslide somewhere on a steep slope, perhaps over on the rim of the lake a mile and a half away. He listened again, but there was no further sound—only a whisper of wind in the fir trees close by, and the gentle run of the water in the creek. Suddenly Bennie realized that he was in the very heart of the wilderness, that except for his four companions asleep beside him, there wasn't a human being within a day's hike. He also realized that if he didn't put some wood on the fire pretty quick, it would be out entirely.

So he crawled out of his blanket as gently as he could, and tried to make no noise as he put on more fuel. He blew on the coals till the new wood caught, and then turned his cold back to the flames. As he did so, he saw Spider's eyes open in the sudden light. Spider blinked a second, and then sat up.

"Hello," he whispered. "You cold?"

"Gosh, I was most frozen," Bennie whispered back.

"Me, too. Been sleeping on a rock, right in the middle of my hip. Ow, it's sore!"

Spider now got up also, and came close to the fire.

When they were warmed up again, they lay down once more, and managed to doze off. But long before morning, Bennie woke to see first Mr. Stone and then his uncle putting more wood on the fire. It wasn't yet dawn—just the first hint of lightness in the sky—when Bennie finally woke up so cold and so stiff and

uncomfortable from the hard ground, that further sleep seemed impossible. He was just rousing himself to put on more wood when he heard Spider stir, and then sit up.

"I'm going to stay up," he whispered. "Let's take a trot around to get warm."

Spider rose, and after building up the fire and huddling over it a few minutes, they walked away from camp.

"Let's go up the valley to the rim," Spider said. "We can go on the rim road, and have easy walking. Gee, I'd like to run all the way, and get up some circulation."

They set out rapidly, and reached the rim in fifteen minutes. It was lighter now, and they could see plainly. The lake at this point was only 500 feet below them, for they had come out on the lowest point on the entire rim. But, even so, they seemed to be looking down into the clouds. They looked up into clouds, too, whole masses of clouds around the peak of Scott, of Dutton Cliff, of Garfield. Then the daylight increased rapidly, the clouds began mysteriously to disappear, holes came in them showing the blue water—and suddenly Spider grabbed Bennie's arm and pointed half-way down the side.

Bennie looked, and saw a small deer—a mule deer, as it is called—coming rapidly up the steep incline, directly toward them! He could not get their scent from so far below, and he quite evidently hadn't seen them. On he came, bounding easily up the incline, where a man would have toiled breathlessly.

"Wow! I'd like to be able to go up a mountain like that!" Bennie exclaimed.

Almost at his first word, they saw the deer's big ears prick up. He landed stock still and rigid, and raised his eyes. Then he saw the two boys above him, and with a single bound, so quick the scouts couldn't detect how he made the turn, he was off at right angles, along the slope. Working upward as he leapt along, he reached the rim three hundred yards away from them, and disappeared like smoke into a stand of fir.

"What a shot!" breathed Bennie.

"Aw, you couldn't have hit him in a year," Spider laughed.

"Why couldn't I?"

"First place, you can't shoot well enough, and second place I'd have knocked up your gun," said Spider. "I wouldn't shoot a deer as long as I had anything else to eat."

"He was kind o' pretty," Bennie agreed.

"'Tisn't that so much. But he's *wild*. He's part of the wilderness. He belongs to it. Killing a deer is just as bad as knocking off the top of a mountain, or spoiling all the forest trees."

"Maybe you're right," Bennie admitted. "But how about going back and getting grub?"

The sun was up when they reached camp again, and so were the other three campers.

"'Smatter, boys?" asked Mr. Stone. "Getting an appetite before breakfast?"

"So cold we couldn't sleep," they answered.

"I was none too warm myself."

"And I was none too comfortable," the doctor added.

"Ho!" cried Dumplin', who was starting the breakfast over the fire, "I never woke up once. Just as warm as anything, and never felt a stone in me all night."

"Well, who wouldn't be warm if he was covered with a blubber bed-spread!" Bennie retorted.

"And who wouldn't sleep soft if he carried his own upholstery?" said Spider.

"All right, kid," Dumplin' grinned. "But there are times when it pays."

The sun was not far up when they finished breakfast, cached the grub and blankets and the packs, and armed only with the alpenstocks, a pocketful of raisins and chocolate, the canteens and cameras, set out for the summit of Scott's Peak, which rose directly above them, and seemed to be reached, after the first pull up the steep side of the ravine, by a fairly easy incline. The map showed, too, that the distance was less than three miles.

"Three miles—three hours," said Bennie. "A mile an hour is what the Appalachian Club allows. We'll be there at half-past nine."

"Getting sure again, are you?" said his uncle. "This isn't Mount Washington, where the Appalachian Club climbs. This is Scott's Peak. It isn't made of granite, but it's a spur volcano spit up out of the side of old Mazama, and it's about 2,500 feet of nice, soft pumice dust from here on."

It was.

Once over the first scramble up the side of the ravine, they settled down to a steady plod in the soft, volcanic stuff. Their feet sank deep into it. The pitch was greater than it looked, too, and every time they threw their weight on to the forward foot, it sank back a way. Sometimes there were patches of snow they could get on, for partial relief. But mostly this side of the mountain had melted off, and it was just a long, weary, back-breaking grind up the pumice. Did you ever climb a steep pile of sand? Anyhow, you have walked in the deep, dry, soft sand above the tide mark on a beach. You know what hard work it is. The climb up Scott was just like that, only more so. One hour, two hours, three hours, four hours, and part of five, with many a rest, and the sun getting hotter and hotter, before they reached the summit.

"Well, boys, this is the highest you've been yet," said Mr. Stone. "Eight thousand nine hundred and thirty-two feet."

"Wish there was a tree we could shin to make it an even 9,000," said Bennie.

Dumplin' wiped the sweat from his face, and collapsed on the ground, panting. "I wouldn't climb a barber's pole," he announced.

"Well, you can see most of eastern Oregon without sitting up," his father laughed.

This was certainly true. From the top of Scott, they could look eastward for a hundred miles, over a great plain almost as flat and bare as the sea, a sage

brush desert. North and south they could look mile after mile in either direction along the tumbled, snowy world of the Cascade range. And just below them, to the west, they looked down 3,000 feet into the blue hole of Crater Lake.

"There's most room enough for a feller to breathe, out here," Bennie remarked. Then he started to drink from his canteen, and discovered it was empty.

"Fill it with snow," said his uncle.

Dumplin' had drunk up all his supply, too, so both of them hunted out a snow-bank, dug down to clean snow, and began to stuff it into their canteens. "Gosh! where does it all go to!" Dumplin' remarked, after three or four minutes.

"Takes a lot of snow to make a little water," Bennie answered. "Mine's full—full o' snow. Now let her melt!"

Presently, after he had eaten his raisins, he took a pull at the canteen, and got about one good swig of water.

"Let's be going down," said he.

"Just so you can get a drink?" asked Spider.

"Marvelous, Watson, marvelous," Bennie laughed. "Why haven't they given you a job on the detective force?"

But the rest, by now, had emptied their canteens, too, and everybody was thirsty, so down they started. It was easy going down. When the slope was smooth, they set in their stocks as far ahead as they could reach, and then took a long vault, down past them, pulled them out, and repeated. In one hour

they had covered the ground it took them five on the ascent.

It was only a shade after two o'clock when they reached their cache, so they shouldered their luggage and hiked on down the valley, away from the lake, for nearly five miles, till they reached a region of grass and flowers and heavy timber, where the Sand Creek had cut down a deep cañon in the volcanic soil and lava, but the strangest cañon you ever saw, because some of the lava was harder than the rest, and the water hadn't cut this, but left it sticking up all through the gorge, in great, round, water-worn pinnacles. Imagine hundreds of Bunker Hill monuments, round instead of square-cornered, erected helter-skelter at the bottom of a wild cañon, and you have a picture of the pinnacles. Here, near the brink, in sheltered woods, they made their second night's bivouac.

And this time Bennie woke up only once in the night, and had to be shaken awake in the morning.

"I must be getting fat, like Dump," he said. "I wasn't very cold, and I'm not very sore."

"You're getting harder," said his uncle. "If we did this a couple of weeks, we could all sleep out like tops."

The third day they hiked back to their camp on the rim, using the rim road to get around the cliffs and ridges—a long grind with the heavy packs, but quite uneventful.

And when they got to camp, the doctor announced, "We leave to-morrow, at six o'clock. Everybody out at four-thirty. Won't need any grub except for to-

morrow's breakfast and lunch, so we can clean up the larder for dinner. Bennie, go over and smile sweetly at the hotel cook, and see if you can coax him to sell you a big beefsteak, and a loaf of bread, and a head of lettuce."

"Get a lemon meringue pie if he's got one," Dumplin' added.

"The cook's an awful grouch," the doctor laughed, when Bennie had gone. "He'll throw him out of the kitchen."

Everybody was busy about camp, getting dinner ready, when Bennie returned with a large package. He opened it with a grin. It contained two steaks, a head of lettuce, a loaf of bread—and a lemon pie!

"The cook's an awful old grouch," Mr. Stone remarked to Uncle Billy, winking at the boys.

"*How* did you do it?" demanded the astonished doctor.

"It's my fatal beauty," said Bennie airily. And that's all he would tell.

But to Spider, later, he said, "Remember that fat old guy that used to cook at the White Doe Inn, back home? The one that used to come to all our ball games? Well, he's the cook at the hotel here now. I knew Uncle Bill was trying to put one over on me, and I didn't have a notion how I was going to beat him, till I saw who the cook was. He came at me mad as anything, 'cause campers are always trying to buy stuff off him. Looked as if he was going to throw me out. And then I said, 'Hello, Mr. Leary,

coming down to the field to see us play Lenox tomorrow?'—and he recognized me—and, say! I was so glad I gave him all the change from Uncle Billy's bill."

"Some luck!" Spider laughed.

"Don't you tell, now."

"Not a word. But, boy, I'm going to eat my share of that steak!"

It was a glorious meal, and Dumplin' kissed the pie plate when it was all over.

After Bennie had carried the pie plate back to the cook, while the rest washed up the dishes, Uncle Billy asked for the Scout Manual, and read what a scout has to do to get a merit badge for hiking.

"To obtain a merit badge for hiking, a scout must:

1. Show a thorough knowledge of the care of the feet on a hike.

2. Walk five miles per day, six days in the week, for a period of three months. This may include walking to and from school or work. He shall keep a record of his hikes daily, preferably in his diary, a transcript to be made an exhibit before the court of honor.

3. Walk ten miles on each of two days in each month for a period of three months; in other words, six walks of ten miles each during the three months.

4. Walk twenty miles in one day.

5. Locate and describe interesting trails, and walk to some place marked by some patriotic or historical event.

6. Write his experiences in these several walking trips with reference to fatigue or distress experienced, and indicate what he had learned in the way of caring

for himself as regards equipment such as camping and cooking outfit, food, footwear, clothing and hygiene.

7. Review his ability to read a road map (preferably a Government topographical map), to use a compass, and shall be required to make a written plan for a hike from the map."

"Number one," Uncle Billy said. "What have you learned about the care of the feet, Bennie?"

"Wash 'em in cold water when you can, and dry 'em thoroughly. Wear wool socks, and carry two extra pairs. At home we carry adhesive tape, to put over a place that may start chafing, so's to stop a blister."

"That's all right. The best care of the feet, though, is to have stout, easy boots, that *fit*. Well, number two—we haven't walked five miles a day for six weeks, have we? You'll have to do that at home. Number three—'Walk ten miles on each of two days, in each month for a period of three months.' You can count this hike as ten miles, or its equivalent, on each of three days, for July, all right. We hardly made ten miles the first day, but it was equal to fifteen or twenty of ordinary walking. You did two miles and a half before breakfast the second day, then six up and down the mountain, and six more before camp at night. That's fourteen and a half, with three of 'em up Scott's Peak in the pumice."

"That ought to count for twenty, I'll say," Bennie declared. "And how much the last day?"

"Well, with our getting wood for breakfast, and

taking a last look at the pinnacles, and your two trips to the hotel, I guess we can call today twenty miles."

"I'll take a trot around now, if I need to," Bennie laughed.

"No, you can sit still. Well, that qualifies you on number four, anyhow, and gives you a good start on number three. Number five you'll have to do at home. Number six you can attend to some day in camp, and let me see what you've written about these three days. Number seven—h'm—you've got a lot to learn yet about using maps, I suspect. Go get your map of Crater Lake, and let me see you lay out, with a pencil, what looks like the best way to hike from here to Crater Peak, five miles south of us."

Bennie worked over this for some time, and then showed the line he had drawn.

"Good!" said his uncle. "I'm glad to see you haven't drawn an air-line path that plunges you down any 500-foot precipices, or takes you up any 600-foot walls."

"I learned something on this trip," said Bennie. "I learned that when they put contour lines close together on a map, it means steep, and if there are a lot of 'em, and they are very close, it means, 'Detour to the right.'"

"That's the idea. Well, boy, are you going to stick? Will you write out for me an account of this trip, and the next one we take, too, and try to work for this merit badge?"

"You bet I will!"

"May I, too?" asked Spider.

"Gee, he's got so many badges now he looks like Marshal Foch," said Bennie.

"The more the better," laughed the doctor. "Now, boys, bed! Big Ben is set for 4:30."

"It'll take a Big Bertha to wake *me* at 4:30," said Dumplin'.

"Oh, you air mattress!" sighed Bennie, as he crawled into his sleeping bag.

Spider answered never a word. He was fast asleep.

CHAPTER XVII

Good-bye to Crater Lake, and a Motor Trip to Bend

UNCLE BILLY was as good as his word the next morning. At half-past four he shook Bennie and Spider, and he had to shake them hard, too. Then all three of them went into the other tent, and rolled Mr. Stone and Dumplin' upside down in their sleeping bags. It was still cold, and the sun was not yet up over the snowy crags of Garfield. In the still, crystal-clear air, the water of the lake was without a ripple, and every rock and tree on the rim was perfectly reflected in the blue mirror.

"Take a good long look, boys," said the doctor. "It's good-bye to Crater Lake as soon as we can load the cars."

"I hate to leave it," Spider said. "I don't believe I'll ever see anything so grand again, or have such a good time."

"I hate to leave it, too," said Bennie. "But I bet we'll have a lot more good times. I guess old Oregon is full of 'em."

"I am satisfied with Oregon," Dumplin' began to sing, in a high falsetto voice to the tune of "Glory, glory, hallelujah."

"Shut up, do you want to wake everybody else on the rim, just because you're up?" his father cautioned.

"Time they got up," Dumplin' laughed. "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man dopy with sleep in his eyes."

"Gosh, if he can't sing, he makes up poetry," Bennie groaned. "Give him a flapjack, quick."

As soon as breakfast was over, Mr. Stone and the doctor tinkered the cars for the trip, while the boys struck the tents, deflated and rolled up the sleeping bags, packed their dunnage sacks, and then began to stow the luggage in the cars. It was after seven when everything was at last packed aboard, and Uncle Billy gave the order to start. The engines turned over, reluctant to start after their long idleness, but at last the explosions came, the exhausts spit smoke, and the cars moved out over dry ground, where a week ago had been a snow-drift, headed toward the road.

"Good-bye, old lake!" cried Bennie.

"Au revoir, for me. *I'm* coming back some day," said Spider.

"And now where, Uncle Billy?" Bennie added.

"Bend," said his uncle. "I wish we could go back home on the Sky Line Trail that some day Oregon is going to build into a highway right up along the spine of the Cascades. But at present it is only a ranger's trail, and it takes weeks to travel it, with an expensive pack train. So we are going by motor up the east side of the range to the town of Bend, and we'll get a pack train there and go in and sample a bit of the

Sky Line Trail, to say we've ridden it, and maybe climb a snow mountain."

"Are we going in on horseback?" Bennie demanded.

"We are, if we go at all," said his uncle.

"Hooray! I never rode horseback!"

"You'll have plenty of chance to learn, then," Uncle Billy smiled. "About the first night, you'll wish you hadn't tried to learn, too."

"Bet I won't!" Bennie retorted. "How far is it to Bend?"

"Oh, a hundred miles, I guess. Maybe more."

"Seven-thirty now—twenty-five miles an hour, that means we get there at noon."

"You are my idea of an optimist, Bennie," said the doctor. "This is an eastern Oregon road we are going to travel on. If we should travel twenty-five miles an hour, we wouldn't get there at all."

For many miles, the road out of the park took them in a southerly direction, down the Anna Creek valley, through a noble forest of yellow pines, a tree the boys had never seen before, which has great flat scales of bark which looks almost like copper, and past the deep cañon the creek has cut in the lava, with sides fantastically carved into giant columns. Finally, they reached the gate of the park, were checked up by the gateman, and went on, swinging eastward now.

Bennie, as soon as they were off the government road, very soon realized why they wouldn't make Bend at noon. In eastern Oregon, a country "dirt" road, which in the East is usually quite decent in summer

isn't a dirt road at all, really, because there isn't any dirt. All the soil is powdered volcanic ash and pumice, no doubt deposited there by Mount Mazama ages ago. This volcanic soil looks almost gray-white in color, and a road made on it, without any macadam, is very quickly pounded, in dry weather, into a layer of dust inches thick, which rises like a smoke screen behind the car, and gets kicked out of holes in the road by the passing tires till the holes deepen more and more, making the road one endless series of bumps.

Instead of traveling at twenty-five miles an hour, the doctor held the car down to fifteen, and very often had to go slower than that.

And it was hot down here below the range, hot and close. The yellow pines, and then endless acres of ugly lodge-pole pines, lined the road on both sides, shutting out wind and view. Only now and then did they catch a glimpse of Scott's Peak, and later of Thielsen. They were in the dry country, too, for almost no rain ever falls on the east side of the Cascades. So they passed no brooks, after leaving Anna Creek. Choked with dust, the boys sampled the canteens frequently, and rejoiced that they weren't in the second car, which was following far behind, to keep out of the dust as much as possible.

It was almost noon when they reached a stream at last, coming down from the snow-fields—and they were only half-way on their journey! Here they stopped for lunch. The doctor had insisted on saving out two cans of peaches for this occasion, and now they understood why. It was a job to worry the dry bread

and the bacon down their parched throats, but how those cool peaches, and the juice they were canned in, did go to the spot!

The trip was resumed, and they went on and on northward, through endless forests of yellow pines, one of the few trees that will flourish in this dry region, till at last they came into the tiny little town of Crescent.

It was Bennie who spied a sign, "Soda" over the one store. He gave a yell, and hoisted his feet over the car door, ready to jump.

The soda turned out to be the bottled variety, and it hadn't been kept on ice. In fact, there was no ice in the place. But even that didn't prevent the five tourists from leaving behind ten empty bottles when they departed again.

The road through the endless yellow pine forest began to get better now. It had been straightened out and rock ballasted in places, and Uncle Billy stepped on the gas. He was traveling along at twenty-five miles or more, leaving a cloud of dust behind, when Bennie suddenly cried, "Say, I believe we just went through a town. Golly, I wonder if there was a soda there. Let's go back."

"This car doesn't know how to turn around," said Uncle Billy. "That was the town of La Pine. I know the man who used to own most of it."

"What happened? Did he lose it out of his pocket?" said Bennie.

"I guess it crawled under a pine needle and hid from him," said Spider.

It wasn't long now before the car rolled out of the yellow pine forests into a great clearing, where every tree had been cut down as far as the eye could see, and a fire had followed, burning up all young stuff and making the ground dry, naked ashes.

"That's what the lumbermen do to us!" Uncle Billy cried. "It's worse than what they do to you in the East, because the fire does so much more damage in this dry country. I wonder how long it will be before we wake up and make them lumber properly? I hope you Boy Scouts will always work for conservation and proper forest laws."

"If they'd left one old tree to the acre for cone bearers, and kept the fire out, I should think the forest would almost start itself again," said Spider. "But they haven't left a single tree."

"They are hogs," Uncle Billy exclaimed, angrily. "It makes my blood boil every time I go through country like this, and think that the voters of the State let 'em do it."

The road was hard now, the car went faster, and in a short time they began to see the houses of a town. They swung under a railroad, rolled on to asphalt pavement, and found themselves in the middle of Bend, a brisk, clean little city of 5,000 people.

"Well, what do you know about this!" Bennie laughed. "It just pops right up here in the desert, like a toadstool. And, oh, boy, there's a soda fountain—and a movie theatre!"

Spider and Uncle Billy laughed. "He's a great wilderness scout, he is," said the doctor. "He's glad-

der to see a movie theatre than he was to see Crater Lake."

Bennie grinned a little sheepishly. "No, it isn't that," he said, "but as long as we got to be in a town, might as well have something to do."

"The first thing I'll do is to get a bath," the doctor laughed, as he drove right past the drug store, and stopped in front of the hotel.

The other car rolled up behind them, Mr. Stone's and Dumplin's clothes and faces covered thick with dust, and the car looking gray-white all over. The boys got out the dunnage bags and carried them into the lobby, while the cars were taken to a garage. As soon as the doctor and Mr. Stone came back, they got three rooms, one for Bennie and Spider, one for Dumplin' and his father, and one for the doctor. Off came their clothes, and from three bathtubs came the sounds of splashing.

They were a much cleaner and more civilized looking outfit when they came down to dinner.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Boys Encounter "Pep," Who Promises Them a Bear Hunt

THEY were just coming out of the dining-room when a tall, very thin man came hurrying in from the street, saw them, and with a loud, "Hello, Doc!" rushed over to shake Uncle Billy's hand.

"Just heard you were in," he cried.

The doctor introduced him as the "biggest booster in Bend." His name, the boys gathered, was Peters, though the doctor called him "Pep," which was evidently his popular title.

"Well, boys, what do you think of Oregon?" he demanded as soon as he knew they were from the East. "Some State, eh? I'll say it is. Wait till you see the Jefferson country. Say, want to go on a bear hunt?"

Of course, he had started by asking them what they thought of Oregon, and the boys were all set to make a polite answer, but he never gave them a chance to reply, and ended up instead by asking if they wanted to go on a bear hunt!

"Sure we do!" the boys chorused.

("He's a queer one," Bennie whispered to Spider. "Answers his own questions half the time.")

"Pep" was now talking again. "I can fix it up,

Doc. Maybe your friend would like to get a movie of a bear. There's a crowd in camp over at Elk Lake now who want a bear hunt. Some of 'em do, anyhow. We can go over there and pick 'em up, and run over to Newberry Crater and pick up a bear all right. You know old Vreeland, who lives on the big ranch south of La Pine? He's got a pack of hounds, and plenty of horses, and he'd rather go on a bear hunt than go to Heaven. What do you say?"

"Well, boys, what do *you* say?" the doctor asked, turning to the scouts and Dumplin'.

Bennie sighed with comical exaggeration. "Oh, of course, I'll go if you want to," he answered. "I strive to please."

Everybody laughed except Spider. "Are you going to kill the bear?" he questioned.

"No, indeed," said Pep. "We catch 'em by the tail out here in Oregon, and then tie a blue ribbon round their necks, so they'll look prettier as they gambol through the woods."

Spider bit his lip as if he was angry, and was trying not to make a rude reply.

"That's all right, too," he finally said, "but some folks like to kill wild animals and some folks don't. I'm one of the ones who doesn't. Bears don't do any harm. I'd like to see one, and see Mr. Stone get a picture of it. Hunting with a camera is harder, and better sport, I think."

"I'll say it'll be hard, all right," said Pep. "Wait till you see the stuff you'll have to carry your camera through! As for the shooting, Newberry Crater is a

State bird and game refuge, and you have to get permission to hunt bears on it; but I've got that O. K., because they want the bears killed off. All they ask is that you report the stomach contents."

"I've just got something new I've not shown any of you yet," Mr. Stone now put in. "It was waiting for me here, in my mail. It's a movie camera no bigger than a kodak, which works with a spring instead of a crank, and takes twenty-five feet at a time. I can carry it in the pocket of a hunting coat. It's for just such a time as this, when the big camera couldn't be taken along. I'd like to try it—that is, if you can guarantee the bear."

"What'll happen to me if I don't produce the bear?" Pep demanded.

"We'll take your horse, and make you walk home," the doctor said.

"Easy! It's only thirty miles! Shall we start tomorrow morning?"

"Sure. I guess we can stow you into our cars somewhere."

"Stow me nothing! I got a car of my own. It's a dandy, too—a genuine antique, built in 1909. They made regular cars in those days. Well, you be ready at eight o'clock. I'll be around for you, and lead the way."

"But we haven't any guns," said Bennie, suddenly.

"Don't matter. Vreeland has plenty. Don't need more'n one, anyhow, to kill a bear. So long."

Pep departed, striding with his long legs out of the lobby.

"He's a queer one," said Mr. Stone. "What does he do for a living?"

"Real estate, I guess," the doctor answered. "He's a great booster for Bend, and spends half his time fixing up parties for visitors who come here. He's a great card. Well, boys, I suppose you're going to the movies now?"

"I can see the movies without coming 4,000 miles," Bennie answered. "Me for a look around this burg."

"Me, too," said Spider. "Doug Fairbanks won't seem such a wonder after we've climbed old Llao Rock."

"Boys," cried Uncle Billy, "you have not come to Oregon in vain!"

CHAPTER XIX

The Bear Hunt—In Which the Boys Discover that the Bear Doesn't Do All the Hard Work

RIGHT after breakfast the next morning they got the cars out and left behind at the hotel all the luggage they wouldn't need on the bear-hunting trip. Mr. Stone was exhibiting his new camera, an astonishing invention which he held in his hand like a kodak, while it took twenty-five feet of film (he could carry as much as two hundred feet of extra reels in one side pocket, too), when Pep appeared in his "antique." They heard him before they saw him, in fact. The car was a runabout. The paint apparently had vanished about 1918. The muffler was broken so that she roared and spit like a motorcycle. One mud-guard was so cracked that it half hung from the car and flapped and rattled. The other three were bent and dented. The wind-shield was cracked, and the radiator was covered with iron rust where the water had boiled over and run down the sides. When Pep put his foot on the brake to stop, she shrieked and wailed like a sick cat.

Bennie walked over to this car and stared intently.

"Some boat!" he said. "Some boat! Say, Spider, a scout is always respectful and kind to the aged and infirm. Remember that. What's its name, Mr. Peters?"

"Its mother never named it," said Pep. "I've called it a lot of things, but they aren't very polite."

Dumplin' laughed. "I know what its name is, all right."

"Yes?"

"Its name is Methuselah."

"I thought Methuselah died when he was only nine hundred," said Bennie.

"Say, if you boys make fun of my car, I won't let you ride in it," Pep threatened.

"Would it hold up two passengers?" asked Bennie.

"All aboard!" called the doctor. "Stop insulting Pep's chariot, and climb into your own. Lead the way, Pep."

Pep spun his crank around, Methuselah grunted, spit, coughed, and then roared, the doctor and Mr. Stone stepped on their starters, and the procession moved down the main street of Bend, Methuselah leading, and swung south on the same road they had come up the day before. Once out in the open, Pep began to travel. Through the cloud of dust he kicked up, those behind could see the rear wheels of the old runabout go bobbing up and down, and from side to side. The doctor's speedometer crept up to thirty, to thirty-five, to forty miles, as he followed.

"Gosh, he doesn't care what happens to him!" Bennie said. "Think of hitting forty on this road in Methuselah!"

"Think of hitting forty on *any* road in Methuselah," Uncle Billy laughed. "He'll stop pretty soon, to cool her off—and tell us it was for something else."

Before long he did stop. When the other cars drew up, Pep was standing beside Methuselah, at a place where a side road led off to the west, toward the white-capped mountains.

"Thought you might miss the turn if I didn't wait," he explained.

The doctor winked at the boys, and Bennie got out and started to put his hand on Methuselah's radiator. But he speedily removed it.

"Will you have your eggs three minutes or four this morning, gents?" he asked. Then he listened with his ear near the hood. "Uncle Billy, I think you ought to come here," he added. "I'm afraid poor old Methuselah has got blood pressure."

Even Pep laughed at this. "Maybe I give him too much meat," he said.

The cars now turned up the side road, which was little more than a couple of wheel ruts through the endless yellow pine forest, and began to wind their way southwestward. Even Methuselah didn't hurry through here. The road was too rough and too winding.

"Say, I expect to meet myself coming back on this road," Bennie declared. "The feller who laid it out must have had the blind staggers."

"If it was straightened it wouldn't be more than half as long," said the practical Spider.

Presently, coming around a sharp turn, they found Methuselah silent and stalled, with Pep, the hood lifted, poking into the engine.

Everybody climbed out, and went over to him.

"What's wrong?" they asked.

"I just stopped to tell you about a man who was drawing a load of hay over this road once," said he. "He never got it out, because the horses ate it all up behind his back from the tail of the wagon."

"That's a good story. Now let's go on," winked the doctor.

"Wait just a minute," Pep said. "Methuselah's foot slipped, and he sprained his carburetor. I think it's his carburetor. Maybe he pulled a tendon in his ignition."

"Quick, doctor, the arnica!" called Bennie.

But Spider, who knew something about cars, was poking into the engine.

"I don't think it's the carburetor," he said. "You've flooded that trying to start her. Let me have a screw-driver, and you turn her over slowly."

He traced the ignition around till he found a spot where there was no spark, and behind that found a loose connection, into which had settled an insulating film of dust and grit. When this was cleaned and tightened, Methuselah coughed and spit and roared again, and once more they started on their way.

Methuselah had no more mishaps, though they expected to find him stalled around every bend, and after a couple of hours they came out of the yellow pine forest into open country, right under the big mountains, and presently before them lay Elk Lake, with the white reflection of South Sister, 10,000 feet high and snow covered, mirrored in the dark water. The road ran along beside the lake to the upper end, and there,

in a grove of pines and fir trees, was a big camp, and men and women just sitting down to luncheon at long board tables. Methuselah had been parked beside the road, and Pep was bobbing about talking and laughing with the crowd.

"What's the big idea?" Bennie asked. "Gee whiz, a whole bunch of strange people, and no chance for a swim!"

"I guess they don't own the whole lake," the doctor laughed. "Anyhow, they'll give us some grub."

The crowd, they found, was a convention of Oregon editors, with their wives. They were having a fine time, no doubt, but the newcomers didn't seem exactly to fit.

"Spider was one of the editors of our high school paper last winter," said Bennie, "but all I did was get an advertisement for it from Dad. I thought we were going to hunt bears, not editors."

As soon as lunch was over somebody got up and began to make a speech. The crowd sat back and got ready to listen. Whereupon Uncle Billy beckoned to the boys and Mr. Stone, and they silently sneaked away from the tables.

"I didn't go on a vacation to listen to speeches," the doctor said. "It will be too late to get into camp at Newberry Crater tonight if we hang around here till that bunch gets through telling each other what's wrong with the newspaper business. You wait here while I have a heart-to-heart talk with Pep."

After ten minutes the doctor came back with the long, lank Peters.

"Sorry, boys," Pep said. "I thought there were a couple of good sports in this outfit who really wanted a bear hunt. But when I told 'em they'd have to sleep out, and get up at three A. M., they decided they'd rather listen to the speeches. Some folks would do anything rather than get up in the morning. Well, come on, we'll get our bear even if there isn't anybody to write it for the papers."

"Oh, ho!" cried Uncle Billy, "so that was it! Well, I am a dumb-bell, as Bennie would so elegantly put it. I didn't realize before why you were so set on having some editors along. You want to be boosting Bend all the while, don't you? Maybe Spider will write it up for his school paper. That's something. Cheer up, Pep, and see if Methuselah is still alive."

Pep spun the crank till the drops of sweat fell from his forehead before she coughed and started.

"I get a fine lot of exercise with this car," he panted, wiping his face before he climbed aboard.

They cut south from the winding road after a little way, and presently arrived in the hamlet of La Pine, the town which Bennie said one of Uncle Billy's friends once lost out of his pocket. Not far from this town, in an extraordinarily green meadow beside the Deschutes River, a long meadow like a rich oasis in the dry desert soil, they came to the Vreeland ranch, where the house sat beneath great poplar trees, and the barns were full of fresh-cut alfalfa and the cattle were browsing as they do in the East, along the river bank.

"Give this soil some water," said Spider, "and instead of a desert, it's like our richest farms at home."

"Yes, sir. Irrigation is all we need in Oregon to grow anything," said Uncle Billy, as the three cars pulled up in the yard.

Pep found Mr. Vreeland out in a field, and brought him in. He was a big, bronzed man, who looked hard and wiry for all his gray hair and beard, and at the suggestion of a bear hunt his eyes lit up and he smiled. A long, low whistle brought an answering joyous yelp from a near-by barn, and four hounds, with thin bodies and long ears and sad faces, came jumping and wriggling up to him.

"Them pups'll get you a bear, if there is a bear," said their master proudly. "I guess we can rustle up the horses. Let's see, we'll need six for you, and one for me, and one for the rustler, and a pack animal—that's nine. We'll start in an hour. Hi—Tom!" he shouted to a man out in the paddock.

"He doesn't lose any time," whispered Mr. Stone.

"Not when he smells a bear," Pep replied. "He can see a bear track in the dark. And he's got some regular dogs."

While the horses were being saddled the boys made up six blanket rolls for their party, and one for Pep, and packed up enough provisions for a couple of days. The provisions, a few "eating irons" and cooking utensils, and the blankets were put on the pack horse. Mr. Vreeland brought out two rifles, one for himself and one for somebody else.

"Who gets it?" he asked.

"Not I," said Spider.

"Nor I," said Mr. Stone. "Here's my gun." He patted the case of his tiny movie camera, which was slung from his shoulder.

"I'll take it," said Bennie.

"Know how to use it?" the man asked.

"N-not very well," Bennie admitted.

"Well, it isn't loaded," Mr. Vreeland laughed. "Suppose you carry it today, and learn how much it weighs. Are we all set?"

Tom, the horse rustler, brought the saddled horses into the yard, and each rider was assigned a mount.

"Pick out a good strong one for that half starved little chap there," said Mr. Vreeland, pointing to Dumplin'. "All you boys are good riders, I suppose?"

"Oh, sure," said Bennie. "We gallop all the time over the wide prairies of Massachusetts. Got a nice mantelpiece for me to eat off of tonight?"

"It's tomorrow night you'll need that," the man laughed. "All aboard!"

In spite of his weight and his gray hair, Mr. Vreeland swung into his saddle with the ease and grace of a cowboy. The doctor and Mr. Stone and Pep were not quite so easy, but they knew how to ride. Dumplin', however, was as green as the two eastern scouts, and the three of them made a mess of mounting, and after they were mounted and their horses had started on a slow trot out of the yard, they bobbed around and jounced up and down like three apples in a dump-cart.

"Say, how do you manage this stunt?" Bennie called to his uncle. "If I keep on this way, I'll all fall apart."

"Stand in your stirrups as naturally and easily as you can, and then lean forward a little from your waist," the doctor called back. "Don't try to do anything but just relax from your waist up, and stand on your stirrups."

The boys tried this, and gradually, very gradually, they began to get on to the trick, so that their bodies rode a little better with the motions of the horses' backs. It was hard work, though, and they were glad enough when they had crossed the highway, headed east up a road through the yellow pines, and finally dropped down to a walk as the road began to climb. When the horses stopped trotting, the three boys sat back in their saddles and took the weight off their tired legs. Of course, they bounced a bit, but that didn't matter when the horse wasn't trotting.

They were on the lower slopes of Newberry Crater now, which is an 8,000-foot mountain standing fifty miles or more east of the Cascade range, all alone in the desert pines, and was once a volcano. On the top, Uncle Billy told them, is a big crater, almost as large as Crater Lake, but only a few hundred feet deep, and instead of being filled with water, it contains two ponds and a lot of summer camps. The whole mountain is a State game reserve, for the slopes are covered with pine woods, and the water attracts both birds and animals.

The party climbed slowly up the dusty road for two

hours, while the boys wriggled and shifted in their saddles to find easy positions (which they couldn't find), and the rifle Bennie was carrying either banged his back or had to be held across his saddle, growing heavier and heavier.

At last, as the sun was setting in the west, they came out of the yellow pines into a big open meadow, through which Paulina Creek flowed on its way down the mountain, making the grass rich and green. Here Mr. Vreeland turned in. The horses were watered at the stream and then hobbled (hobbles are just leather bands like handcuffs put around their forelegs, so they can move around to feed, but cannot wander far away). On the edge of the meadow, near the brook but under the pines, camp was made, by the simple process of building a fire and spreading the blankets on level spots of dry ground. While Mr. Vreeland and Tom, the horse rustler, were cooking supper, the rest went to the creek for a bath. The water was icy cold, but, as Bennie said, it was softer to sit on than a saddle.

After supper they gathered around the fire for a while, in the cold mountain air of night, while Mr. Vreeland told bear stories. The four dogs lay sleeping close to them, one of them, old Ben, Mr. Vreeland's pet, with a muzzle snuggled against his side.

But before long he ordered them to bed.

"I'll get you up before the sun," he said. "That's the only time to start after bears. Their tracks are fresh then, and the dogs can follow 'em."

In spite of their saddle soreness, and the bare ground

they were sleeping on, the boys rolled up in their blankets, without undressing, and were soon fast asleep. There is nothing like riding a horse in the mountains to make you slumber!

"Golly, doesn't seem as if I'd more'n dropped off," said Bennie, sitting up and rubbing his eyes when he was awakened by the voice of Mr. Vreeland.

"I don't care what becomes of ol' bear. I'm goin' sleep some more," mumbled Dumplin', drawing his blankets tighter about his neck and rolling over on the other side.

"Yes, you are!" yelled Spider and Bennie, grabbing the blankets and rolling him suddenly out of them.

It was still dark in the woods, with a dim, gray light over the open meadow. They could scarcely see the horses, which they heard feeding and thumping about on hobbled feet. Tom had the fire going, and soon there was the welcome smell of coffee. After the coffee, everybody felt more awake, the light increased, the trunks of the trees began to emerge from the gloom, and Tom and Mr. Vreeland rounded up the horses and began to saddle.

"Well, son," said Mr. Vreeland to Bennie, "how about that gun today? You're going to ride some pretty rough country, and she'll get heavy."

"I don't think he'd better carry a gun through this going," the doctor said. "Especially as it is somebody else's gun, and he's somebody else's boy, whom I'm responsible for."

"Well, of course, I don't want to worry my uncle," Bennie assented, with surprising cheerfulness.

"You mean you need both hands to hang on to your horse," said Spider.

"Marvelous, Sherlock, simply marvelous!" Bennie laughed. "When we get to the old bear, I'll take the gun from my bearer, and put a well-directed bullet through his brain."

Now, in the fast increasing daylight, they were off, Mr. Vreeland leading the way and sitting his horse as straight as a ramrod. The boys were stiff and sore, but once on the saddle they felt easier than the day before.

The leader crossed the meadow to the upper side, and put his horse up on a long sloping ridge covered with an open stand of yellow pine. As they climbed this ridge, the boys could see a long distance between the trees, and discovered that the side of the mountain was composed of a series of long ridges, like this one, with deep erosion gullies between them. The sides of these gullies were very steep, and at the bottom grew thick stands of lodge-pole pines. After climbing a way on the first ridge, and evidently seeing nothing which appealed to him, Mr. Vreeland suddenly turned his horse right down the side, into the gully. As the boys followed they found their horses' heads almost underneath them, and they had to lean far back in the saddles to keep their balance. At the bottom, Mr. Vreeland simply rode right into the dense stand of little lodge-pole pines and disappeared. The doctor, Mr. Stone and Tom and Pep followed. And after them went the three horses that carried the three boys. There was nothing to do about it. The horses were

trained to follow in file, and it was their job to go through where the others went. But the boys made an interesting, not to say painful discovery.

They discovered that when a horse goes through a thicket of lodge-pole pines, he picks out a place that is wide enough for him to squeeze through, and high enough so his head doesn't hit a limb. But he doesn't pay any attention to the fact that his rider's feet and legs stick out on either side and his rider's head is considerably higher than his own. He's looking out only for himself, and it's up to the rider to take the consequences for getting on his back.

When they emerged on the farther side of the gully, Bennie didn't have any cap, Dumplin' had a hole torn in the right knee of his trousers, and Spider had a rent in the left shoulder of his shirt and a long scratch on his face.

But there was no stopping for repairs. Already the other horses were up on the next ridge, and with a heave and snort the boys' horses suddenly stood on their hind legs and scrambled up also, the boys leaning far forward and hanging on to the horns of their saddles to keep aboard.

"Some sport!" panted Bennie. "Gee, that was a good cap, too."

"My face feels as if the cat had sharpened her claws on me," said Spider.

"My knee's bleeding," puffed Dumplin'.

Mr. Vreeland kept on up through the open woods of the ridge, and suddenly pulled his horse to a sharp halt, in a little patch of light made by the rising sun.

Here he spoke softly to the dogs, who had been padding along at his horse's heels with a bored air, as if a bear were the very last thing they were thinking about. As the dogs trotted sharply forward under the horse's nose and began to sniff where he pointed, Mr. Stone got his camera out of the case and made ready. Suddenly all four dogs began to utter little moaning sounds, like barks just beginning in their throats, and with a loud bay the two younger ones started off down the mountain, while Mr. Stone's camera whirred. Ben, however, didn't go. He kept on moaning and sniffing around.

"They are back tracking. You watch Ben and Cap, the wise old boys!" Mr. Vreeland cried, his eyes dancing with excitement.

Then Ben and Cap, too, suddenly uttered deep, silvery, triumphant bays, and sprang down the farther side of the ridge into a second ravine. An instant later the other two dogs came crying back and followed them, just in time to get into the last foot of the film. Then Mr. Vreeland put his horse down after them at a gallop, and vanished into the pines, followed by Tom and the doctor and Pep. Mr. Stone had a hard time holding his horse while he got his camera back into the case. Then he, too, went down the side of the ravine and into the lodge-poles.

"Now, darling, *please* take it easy! Whoa! Whoa!" yelled Bennie at his horse, as that animal cascaded down the soft soil of the bank and made for the wall of tearing little trees.

Holding their legs as close to the horses' sides as

they could, ducking to protect their faces, wriggling and squirming in their saddles to avoid having their legs torn and bruised by trees between which the horses squeezed, the boys got through, and followed the hunt. They could hear the dogs baying in the next ravine, and over the ridge they went, in time to see the tail of Mr. Stone's horse vanishing into another thicket of scrub.

This kept on for an hour or more—it seemed ages to the three boys. In their efforts to get through the ravines without any more injury to their clothes or their persons than was necessary, they had to slow their horses down, and the hunt, which was working steadily up the mountain, got farther and farther ahead of them. They had long since lost all sight even of Mr. Stone, and the deep, bell-like baying of the hounds grew fainter and fainter. At last it ceased altogether.

When that happened Bennie pulled up his horse and waited for Spider and Dumplin' to catch up.

"Say, fellers," he asked, "what are we going to do? We've lost the hunt, all right. I can't hear a sound now, and we've been off the tracks for twenty minutes, I guess. Those last two ravines we came through hadn't been broken before, and I haven't seen a hoof-print for a long while."

"We're a swell lot of bear hunters, we are," Dumplin' panted. "Gee, Spider, look at your face!"

"Well, if it looks anything the way it feels, I'm some beauty, I can tell you that. Look at your own face—and your pants, too."

"I don't feel as if I had any pants left," said Bennie. "Gee, I'm sore all over, and my hands are all torn. What are we going to do?"

"I guess it's up to us to go back to camp," Spider suggested.

"How are we ever going to find camp?" Dumplin' demanded. "As far as I'm concerned, we're lost."

"'Lost on Newberry Crater, or The Young Bear Hunters from Bend'—sounds like a dime novel," Bennie grinned. "Maybe we could follow our trail back by the blood on the ground. But I got a better idea than that. Let's go on up this ridge a ways till we come to an open place, and then sit there and wait. We can always follow the ridge down westward till we come to the road. Guess we can't starve. Maybe the old bear will trot around past us. They don't travel in a straight line, I guess. Anyhow, it's a chance, and I guess it's our only chance to get back in the game."

"That's a swell idea!" said Dumplin', scornfully. "What you going to do if he does come around? You wouldn't carry the old gun. Use your pocket-knife?"

"No, I'll look at him between my legs," Bennie answered. "The old bear won't trouble us. All he's thinking about is getting away from the hounds. Anyhow, I don't see any use in trying to follow any longer, 'cause we've sure lost the hunt, and I hate to go back this early in the day. We may find a place where we can look out and see something."

"Sounds good to me. You're the captain. Lead on," said Spider.

So Bennie led the way up the open woods of the spine, which were growing lower now, and presently they found themselves in a little clearing on a sort of peak of lava. From here they could look out on one side for miles and miles, over the wilderness of the mountain side, to the white summits of the Cascades. But not a sight nor a sound of the hunt did they have.

They dismounted stiffly, aching in every joint, and tied the horses in the shade. Dumplin' flopped to the ground with a groan. "My knee's all stiff," he complained, "and the blood's all clotted on my leg. Gee, I've got six tears in my pants!"

The boys looked themselves over. Their clothes were torn, their hands and faces scratched and covered with blood, and their thighs and knees sore with the bruising trees. They were, in fact, a woe-begone looking lot.

"And I could drink a barrel of water, and eat a ton of food," sighed Bennie.

"If you talk about water, I shall cry!" Dumplin' exclaimed. "My mouth's full of cotton."

"Go to sleep, and forget it," said Spider.

"If the bear comes, wake me up," Dumplin' answered, closing his eyes at once.

While Dumplin' was slumbering Bennie and Spider debated what they should do. It seemed pretty stupid to sit there all the morning doing nothing, when they had come 3,000 miles to Oregon for a taste of the real wilderness. But, as Spider pointed out, if they tried to follow the hunt again they would only get more

hopelessly lost. Finally they decided the only thing to do was to wait till they heard some sound of it again and then make toward the sound. Unless the bear went clear around the mountain, sooner or later he ought to come within sound of them again, they reasoned. He would try to get back to his familiar hunting ground. They waited one hour, two hours, getting more and more thirsty, when Spider suddenly cried "Hark!"

Far off, somewhere, he and Bennie couldn't yet tell where, they heard the deep, silvery bugle of one dog, apparently old Ben, who had the deepest voice. The hunt was coming their way again! Quickly they roused Dumplin', and all three listened. Yes, there was no mistake! It was the bay of a hound, and it was coming nearer!

"There's only one dog, though," said Bennie. "What's the matter with the others?"

"Probably old Ben has got ahead of the others, or they've got off on another track," said Spider. "Let's wait and see if it stops in one place. That'll mean Ben's treed the bear, I guess. Then we can go there and not get lost again."

"Maybe *you* can," said Dumplin'. "I couldn't go anywhere now, 'cept on a stretcher."

"We'll leave you here then—the air's fine," said Bennie.

The baying didn't stop in one place, however, for ten or fifteen minutes. It seemed to be moving up and down the mountain. Finally, however, it came from a single direction, seemingly only a quarter of a mile to

the right, and down the mountain a bit, and the boys thought they detected a change in the sound. They also could now hear a second dog.

"I bet old Ben has treed him!" Bennie cried, "and one of the other pups has caught up! Come on, let's go see!"

"Just us, a couple of dogs, and no gun, against a bear? No, thank you!" exclaimed Dumplin'.

"Well, I don't live in Oregon," Bennie replied, "but I know that when a bear is treed by a dog, he stays up the tree. Anyhow, I'm going to take a chance. You can stay here alone, if you want to. I'm going to see that old bear. That's what we came here for."

He got up and untethered his horse, climbing stiffly and with a groan into the saddle. Spider followed him.

"Oh, well, if you go, I'm going—if I can ever get aboard that beast," said Dumplin'. "Gee, he's about a thousand feet high!"

Bennie led the way toward the sound of the barking, which was still in one place, but not so loud now, and very hoarse. They had three ravines to cross, but in their excitement they didn't think about the fresh tears and scratches. In fifteen minutes they came very near the sound of the barking. A moment later they broke up out of a lodge-pole thicket to find old Ben running 'round and 'round the trunk of a huge yellow pine, his bark almost gone, like the voice of a man who has been making too many speeches, nothing much left but a hoarse whisper, while Cap was standing with his front paws up the trunk as high as he could reach.

The boys looked up the tree and gave a wild yell, while old Ben, seeing them there, sprang at the tree with renewed life, as if he were trying to climb it, too, to show them he really wasn't winded after all. Far up, sixty or seventy-five feet from the ground, in the crotch of the first big limb, lay a black bear. His fore-paws were hugging the limb, his head was poked over, his tongue kept hanging out, and they could see his little eyes looking at them. Since they had no gun, he was perfectly safe as long as he cared to sit there, and he appeared to know it.

"There's nothing for us to do but wait for the rest," said Bennie. "Golly, he's a big bear! I wonder what he weighs?"

"I hope he stays where he is," Dumplin' put in.

"Come on, let's tie our horses and sit down and wait. Oh, boy, we beat the others to the bear!"

"No, sir, I sit here. My horse can go faster'n I can. Two dogs aren't big enough, all alone, to tackle that bear if he starts coming down."

"Maybe you're right at that," Bennie admitted. "But, say, we've sure got one on the rest when they show up! We'll tell 'em we kept right on old Ben's heels, and beat 'em to it!"

"We'll tell 'em so," Spider grinned. "But if you think you can put it over on Mr. Vreeland you've got another guess coming."

So they attempted to sit on their horses near the tree, but the horses had something to say about that. Some downward current of air brought a sudden bear scent to them, and they began to rear and back and

wheel, so that all three boys jumped off as quickly as they could, and led the twitching animals a long way down the slope and tied them. They hadn't realized before how much a horse fears the smell of bear.

"I nearly got spilled before I could get my foot out of the stirrup," Bennie said. "Thought I was a goner for a minute."

"Me too," said Dumplin'. "This isn't so much fun as it's cracked up to be. Gee, I wish I knew how to ride the way Mr. Vreeland does! He'd just have *made* his horse stand still."

As they were walking back they heard at last the bay of the other two dogs, and then the far-off sound of a horse crashing through lodge-poles. In two minutes the other dogs joined Ben in a dance below the big tree, and in two minutes more Mr. Vreeland and Tom rode up. Behind them, down the mountain, could be heard Pep's and Mr. Stone's and the doctor's horses.

Mr. Vreeland didn't see the boys at first, because they hid behind some bushes.

"Are the doctor and the camera man behind?" they heard him ask Tom. "Too bad the kids had to drop out. We'll have to go hunting for them after Mr. Bear's disposed of. They're wandering around lost, I suppose."

"Is that so?" cried the boys, jumping up from behind the bush.

"Well, I'm darned!" Mr. Vreeland exclaimed. "How did you get here? Where's your horses?"

"Down the slope—tied," said Bennie. "We kept

right on old Ben's heels. How'd you lose the trail? Get off on a false scent? Too bad!"

Mr. Vreeland fixed Bennie with a cool look, which had a twinkle behind it.

"Were you huntin' the bear, or was he huntin' you?" said he. "I used to know a nigger down South, where I was once, who always went out behind a fox hunt, and sat down after a bit, and waited for the fox to come trottin' back. He'd get the fox, and the rest would get the exercise. They had to do somethin' kind o' drastic to that nigger."

("I told you so!" Spider laughed at Bennie. "Can't fool him.")

"You look as if the bear caught you, too," Mr. Vreeland went on. "Did he make those scratches with his claws? He's got nice claws." (This last as he cast a contemplative glance up into the tree.)

"Just the same, we beat you to the old bear, however we did it," Bennie grinned. "Who's going to shoot him?"

"Well, if you got here first, you can take a crack," Mr. Vreeland said. "Wait till the camera man comes. I hear 'em now."

A minute later the doctor and then Mr. Stone and Pep came into the clearing. They were not torn and scratched so much as the boys, but much more than Mr. Vreeland and Tom. And they were even more surprised to find the boys there. However, there was no time for talk. The horses were dancing with nervousness, the dogs were jumping against the tree, and the bear was moving on the limb as if he contemplated

climbing higher. Mr. Stone unlimbered his camera, Spider walked off into the woods because, he declared, he refused to see a fine animal shot in cold blood, and Bennie, armed with a rifle, was told to fire, aiming at the base of the brain.

He sighted and pulled the trigger, trembling with nervousness for fear he wouldn't make a good shot. The kick of the gun staggered him for an instant, but as soon as he caught himself he stared into the tree, to see the bear snarling with pain and rage, but still crouched, alive, on the limb.

Bennie handed the rifle hastily to his uncle. "You do it!" he cried. "Gosh, all I've done is hurt him. I don't want to mess the poor thing up any more."

"Well, of all the ——" Mr. Vreeland began.

"Shoot him, Vreeland," said the doctor, sharply. "I'm no hunter."

The old man raised his rifle, sighted it so quickly that it seemed part of the same motion, and there was a sharp crack. The bear seemed to spring right off the limb and fell, a black ball of fur, seventy feet to the ground.

The dogs were on it in a second, as its paws gave one or two feeble and undirected swipes. Then it lay dead. The dogs were called off, and promptly lay down, panting and exhausted. Bennie wanted to go away somewhere and lie down, too. He felt sick. He had thought it would be wonderful sport to kill a big bear, but now that he had pumped a bullet into it, and then seen the creature, helpless and defenseless, come crashing down dead out of the tree, the fun was

gone. If the bear had been attacking him, or even attacking anybody, it would be different. But just to shoot it in cold blood, for the sake of killing something, suddenly struck Bennie as a low down, cruel trick. He felt the way Spider always felt. He'd never been able to understand Spider's point of view before, but now that he had pumped a bullet into the bear, he understood. He thought of their talk about the deer that morning by the rim of Crater Lake.

But Mr. Stone was calling. He'd got a fresh roll of film into his camera, and wanted to take the whole party around the dead bear. Tom and Mr. Vreeland propped the big brownish-black body up into a sitting posture, Bennie stood beside it, with a gun in his hand, and Dumplin', with a grin on his face, walked up, grasped the bear by the paw, and shook hands with a great show of friendliness.

"You weren't planning to do that about twenty minutes ago," came the voice of Spider, returning to the scene.

"Neither was the bear," Dumplin' answered.

Tom, Mr. Vreeland and the doctor now set about skinning the carcase, which weighed, the hunter estimated, about three hundred pounds. After that the doctor opened the stomach.

Bennie watched this operation for a moment, and then turned quickly away.

"What's the matter?" his uncle asked.

"It—it isn't what you'd call real sweet and pretty," said Bennie.

"You'll never make a doctor, then," said his uncle.

"Not a bear doctor, anyhow," Bennie laughed.

But Spider stood right by. He was intensely interested to see what the doctor found.

"Any evidences of a predatory diet?" he demanded.

"Of a *what?*" said Dumplin' and Bennie. "Say, Mr. Peters, did you bring a dictionary?"

The doctor was looking carefully into the opened stomach.

"As far as I can see," he answered, "this bear was living on vegetable food, for the past day or two. No trace of bones, feathers or meat. I should say he'd been feeding on berries."

"Why does the government want 'em killed, then?" cried Spider.

"Why not? What good do they do?" Mr. Vreeland cut in. "Seems to me you boys are about the most tender-hearted people I ever stacked up against. What do you want to do, spoil all sport?"

"It's just as much sport hunting with a camera," Spider replied, "and a lot more dangerous, if you aren't armed, and takes a heap more patience and skill."

"Yes, and what do you get?"

"You get a picture—if you're lucky—and you leave the animal alive for the next man to see."

Mr. Vreeland grunted in disgust, scraped all the fat he could off the big, heavy skin, folded it up, put it over his saddle, and called his dogs. The boys got their horses, and the tired, hungry party rode down the mountain, following an open ridge to the meadows, and then trotted, lame and sore, to their camp. After

a hasty meal, they rode back to the ranch. The doctor paid Mr. Vreeland for the trip, and insisted on giving him something for the bearskin beside, because it was his shot which brought down the bear. Then they all stood by while Pep struggled to get Methuselah started, and presently were out on the road again, headed for Bend.

Bennie sank back into the deep cushions of the motor with a huge sigh.

"Oh, boy!" he said, "p'r'aps these cushions don't feel good! The last five miles, my saddle was made of cast iron. I'm dead to the world."

"How far did that bear travel before he was treed?" asked Spider.

"I'd say he probably ran fifteen miles," said the doctor. "It was enough, and lucky for you boys he doubled around, or you wouldn't have seen him. I'm pretty sore and tired myself."

"What I don't get," said Bennie, "is how Mr. Vreeland and Tom rode right through those pine thickets without getting torn to pieces. Gee, I've got to buy a new cap and a pair of trousers and a shirt in Bend before I can gladden the public eye."

"They know how," the doctor laughed. "After a while, you learn to estimate how much room there is, as well as the horse does, and protect yourself in advance."

"It was an awful lot of fun," Spider continued—"all but shooting the bear. I think it is wicked to kill off all the wild animals, when they are harmless. Pretty soon we won't have any wild life left. The

bears *must* be harmless, because they don't shoot 'em in the national parks, and nobody gets hurt, and the other game is thick. Mr. Vreeland thinks I'm chicken-hearted, I could see that. But I can't help it. It's not because I'm chicken-hearted. It's because I love the woods and the wild animals in 'em, and hunting with a gun strikes me as kind of silly and wicked."

The doctor drove in silence for a minute. Then he said, "I feel more or less as you do. But you must remember this: Vreeland is an old man who was brought up on the frontier. When he was a boy he had to hunt to get fresh meat. Game was as thick as huckleberries then. There were even grizzlies here in Oregon. It seems perfectly natural to him, and he can't understand why eastern people, or any people, shouldn't want to hunt. He can't understand the word *conservation* at all. But you young fellows, who are born later, into a world where most of the game has been killed off, and most of the forest cut down, don't want to see less wild animals and less woods—you want to see more. Your point of view is just the opposite of his. Conservation has got to be preached and practised by the young chaps. The old fellows don't understand it. They think a man is afraid, or chicken-hearted, if he won't shoot a wild animal. That's why I want to see the Boy Scouts learn all about conservation, and help in the good work."

"You bet!" said Bennie. "When that old bear kind of looked at me and groaned, when I hit him, something turned over in the pit of my tummie. I

guess he had as good a right to live as I have. But I'll sure need his old skin to cover me, if the stores are closed when we get to Bend. I got to have some new pants."

"It's Saturday. They'll be open all the evening," Uncle Billy laughed.

All three of the boys had to buy new khaki breeches when they reached Bend, and new flannel shirts, and Bennie had to get a cap. The doctor gave them some salve and plaster for their cuts and scratches, and after a bath they were ready to eat everything the waitress brought to the table.

"And now," said Mr. Stone, after dinner, "shall we all go to the movies?"

Dumplin' gave his father one look of scorn.

"Bed!" he groaned.

"Bed!" said Bennie.

"Bed!" said Spider.

But Pep, who had stayed to dinner with them, said, "I've got to hunt up the editor of the *Star*, and tell him about this hunt—good story—more advertising for Bend."

"Don't forget to tell him how the three brave boys, alone and unarmed, got to the bear long before the skilled hunters," said Bennie.

"I'll tell him *exactly* how they did it," Pep laughed, as he said good night.

CHAPTER XX

Bennie Achieves a Dog, and the Party Puts Out a Forest Fire

THE next day, Sunday, they stayed in Bend, and, to tell the truth, the boys were just as well pleased. They were all three sore and stiff. Dumplin' had a cut on his knee, Spider's shoulder ached where a dead pine limb had torn both his shirt and his skin, and Bennie had three big black and blue bruises on his legs. The two scouts spent most of the day writing letters home, and also writing up the account of their long hike at Crater Lake, to Mount Scott, as part of the examination for a merit badge in hiking. Spider also studied his government pamphlet on Oregon trees, which he had bought at the Crater Lake Inn. Uncle Billy said that when they got into the heart of the Cascades they would encounter a great number of different kinds of trees, and Spider was determined to identify them.

While they were busy with this, Uncle Billy was busy at the telephone, arranging with a man who lived at Sisters, a little town nearer the mountains, to meet them Monday morning with a pack train, and take them in to Mount Jefferson.

"I don't know whether we are going to get to Mount Jefferson or not," the doctor said at luncheon.

"Norman tells me the snow up here was even heavier last winter than it was at Crater Lake. He says he tried to get over the Divide to Jefferson yesterday, by the short way, and the snow blocked him. We'll have to go in past Marion Lake. That'll take three days, and maybe we won't get there that way. I certainly never knew so much snow at this time of year."

He was wiping the perspiration off his forehead as he spoke, which made everybody laugh. But they could look out of the big plate glass window at the west end of the dining-room and see, fifty miles away, the white-clad summits of the Three Sisters, three big mountains side by side, shining in the sun.

"Are we going to be on horseback all this trip to Jefferson?" Dumplin' asked plaintively.

"You can walk if you want to," his father smiled.

"I feel now as if I'd have to," Dumplin' sighed. "Wish they made pneumatic saddles."

That afternoon, between trips to the garage to pack the cars, and trips to the drug store to buy Spider a note-book for his tree observations, and to get ice cream sodas, Bennie acquired a dog. Maybe it would be more truthful to say that the dog acquired Bennie. He was a young dog, hardly more than a puppy, one of those very small collies which the western sheep men use in herding their flocks. Dumplin' called him a half portion dog. The poor little chap had evidently lost his master, or else he had wandered away from home. He didn't seem to worry much, however. What he was plainly looking for was somebody, anybody, who would be kind to him. He trotted up and

down the street, following different people and trying to attract their attention.

The second time Bennie saw him, he said, "I don't believe that dog's got a master. He's looking for a kind home. Come here, Towser."

He whistled to the pup, and the dog came bounding up to him, tail wagging madly, and crouched puppy fashion at his feet. When Bennie stooped to pat him, he sprang up, put his forepaws on the scout's chest, and tried to lick his face.

"Gosh, you nice little mutt!" Bennie exclaimed. "I sure like dogs, and you're a regular dog."

To this the dog replied with a whine of joy, and from that moment he clung to Bennie like a brother.

"Now you got him, what you going to do with him?" Spider asked, as the pup bounded along beside them, fairly shaking with delight, as his tail switched back and forth.

"Dunno. Get him some grub first, I guess. He looks awful thin."

Bennie went around to the hotel kitchen and begged some meat scraps, which the pup devoured greedily. After that, he tried to follow Bennie into the hotel. No dogs were allowed inside, however.

"I guess he'll go away now," Bennie said, shutting the door in the poor dog's face.

But when they came out from dinner the dog was still lying in front of the door, and as Bennie went out to the sidewalk he leaped upon him, trying to lick his face. He settled down on the door-mat when the boys went in for the night, and the last thing they saw was

his face looking in at them through the screen, his eyes reproachful and sad at being left out.

And when they came down at six in the morning, he was still there! At sight of Bennie, he emitted a glad yelp and began scratching at the door.

"Say, that pup is certainly fond of me," Bennie said, going out and petting it. "Can't I take him along, Uncle Billy?"

"Not a chance," the doctor answered. "We've got troubles enough. Besides, he probably belongs to somebody here in Bend. He'll go home when we've gone."

When they were putting the last of the baggage into the cars in front of the hotel the dog leaped into the doctor's car and sat on the driver's seat, wagging his tail furiously, as much as to say, "Well, well, I'm all ready to start; hurry up!"

He had to be put out three times before the cars were ready. When the order came to start, Bennie hugged him hard, while the pup licked at his face.

"Good-bye, you little mutt, you," said he. "If my uncle wasn't a flinty-hearted old thing, we'd take you along."

Then Bennie climbed over into the car, and they were off for Mount Jefferson. They ran north out of Bend, and then turned west, toward the distant mountains. In the early morning light, clear as a bell, they could see the snow-clad peaks rising against the sky, all the way from the Three Sisters in front of them to Mount Hood, a hundred miles to the north. More than fifty miles away, northwestward, rose the sharp,

glittering white pyramid of Mount Jefferson, their objective. It was their first sight of it, and the doctor slowed down the car so they could have a good look.

And as he did so, they heard a little yip beside the car—and there was the pup, his tongue hanging out, his chest heaving, but his eyes fixed on Bennie in triumph!

"Oh, Uncle Billy, the poor little mutt!" Bennie cried. "Some speed, I'll say. He's going to follow us till he runs his head off. Can't I take him in?"

The words were hardly out of his mouth, and the doctor had no time to reply, before the pup, with one spring, landed in Bennie's lap.

"Looks as if you *had* taken him in," the doctor grinned. "Well, let him stay now. But you'll have to feed him out of your own rations. We can't pack food for a dog."

The dog, with wiggles of his tail and body that expressed his joy as plainly as any words could, snuggled down in Bennie's lap and tried to lick him.

"What are you going to name him?" Dumplin' called out from the other car.

"I guess his name is Mutt," Bennie laughed.

"Seeing's how we are going to Jefferson, better call him Jeff," Dumplin' retorted.

"Jeff it is," Bennie answered, grinning at the joke. "Good old Jeff! I bet he's a good dog. I bet he can round up a flock of sheep. I'm going to take him home when we go."

"How pleased your mother will be," said his uncle.

The cars started up again now, and they rode for

almost fifty miles northwestward, getting presently into the yellow pine forests and then the foot-hills, so that Jefferson disappeared entirely from view. At last the doctor turned his car down a side road, and stopped in front of a small house, all by itself in a forest clearing beside a lovely little river. Opposite this house was a barn, and in the barnyard was a herd of horses.

"Allingham Ranger Station! All out! Far as we go!" cried the doctor. "Hello, Norman!"

This last he shouted to a stocky young man, in khaki riding breeches and leather leggings, who was standing by the barn.

Norman was to be their guide. The horses were his. With him he had two more men, one to take care of the horses and one to cook. That made eight saddle horses needed for the party. There were eight more pack horses to carry the luggage. Although it was only 9:30 o'clock, it took them till almost one to get the cars unloaded, and the tents, dunnage bags, sleeping bags, provisions, cameras, alpenstocks, and so on, packed on the eight horses. Bennie and Spider were of little use in this packing process, because they knew nothing about it. They brought the stuff to be packed to Norman and his two helpers, and watched them stow it across the pack saddles, stretch a canvas over, and then throw a long rope over the heap and under the horse's belly, back and forth several times, till, when it was finally hauled taut and tied, it made a large diamond-shaped design of the load, and held it firmly on.

"Say, that's a complicated process," said Spider. "I can tie most knots after I've seen somebody do it, but I couldn't do that."

"It takes some practice to throw a diamond hitch," Norman laughed. "Well, let's saddle our old cayuses now."

The eight riding horses were saddled, the boys each attending to his own nag. But Norman inspected the saddles before they mounted, and tightened the girths.

"Now, adjust your stirrups," he said. "Don't have them too short. Two fingers between you and the saddle when you stand up is enough. We're not going to ride in Central Park this afternoon."

"Where are we going to ride, by the way?" the doctor asked. "Any chance of getting into Jefferson Park?"

"Not a chance," said Norman. "We can't even get in to Hunt's Cove direct, as I 'phoned you. We've got to detour around by Marion Lake. Too much snow."

"Hope he knows where all those places are," whispered Bennie.

"But can we climb Jefferson from Hunt's Cove?" the doctor asked. "Has anybody ever done it?"

"Never heard of anybody. But we can have a look."

"Why can't you climb it from Hunt's Cove—wherever that is?" Bennie asked.

"Maybe you can," Norman replied. "But it's no picnic. Wait till you see."

"Well, I've been hearing about all this snow," Ben-

nie grinned, wiping the sweat from his forehead, " for two days. I'd like to see some right now."

" Give us time," Norman smiled. "And now we're off. We've got fifteen miles to make before dark."

" But how about lunch? " Dumplin' suddenly demanded.

" Marion Lake before dark! " Norman answered. " No lunch."

Dumplin' groaned.

" It'll help you reduce, Dump," Bennie taunted. " Gidup, Dobbin! Oh, gee, where's poor little Jeff? " And he began to whistle.

Jeff appeared with a loud yelp from the side of the stream, where he had evidently been cooling himself. Shaking off the water, he dashed ahead of the procession of sixteen horses, barking madly, and the march for Jefferson began.

The trail lay through a thick yellow pine forest. This was a United States government forest, so that the fire had been kept out and the little pines were everywhere coming up under the old ones, much to Spider's delight. But the trail itself was dry and dusty, and their noses soon smarted, their throats were dry. With the loaded pack horses, they could not trot, but plodded on in single file, the dust rising in clouds behind them.

They had been traveling perhaps an hour when Norman, riding ahead, suddenly pulled up his horse, and Bennie, just behind him, saw him sniff.

" What's the matter? " the scout asked.

" I smell smoke," Norman answered. Then he

looked at the dust cloud behind to see which way it was moving.

"We are going into the wind. Must be ahead," he said. "You come on with me. Let your uncle lead the train."

He kicked his horse and dashed up the trail. Bennie kicked his horse, and dashed after him, not at all sure that he could keep his saddle. Strangely enough, though, he found it easier to gallop than to trot, and found himself falling into the motion of the horse.

A quarter of a mile up the trail the smell of smoke was plain. Over a knoll they dashed, and they saw smoke in the forest ahead. A moment later they heard the crackle, and then they were on the fire. It was a small one as yet, evidently just under way, but it was licking savagely into the small trees and the dead stuff, all dry as tinder or else full of inflammable pitch. And the flames were moving toward them!

Norman wheeled. "Go back!" he yelled. "Stop the train where it is, and tell Joe to stay with the horses while the rest bring up all the axes, and that camp spade in my pack. Then you go back as fast as you can to the Ranger Station and tell the ranger. If he isn't there, find him!"

Bennie wheeled his horse, and dashed back. He gave the message to the rest, and kept on. Both he and his horse were panting, drenched with sweat and thick with dust, when he reached the Ranger Station again. The ranger was there, as good luck would have it. While Bennie watered his horse, he telephoned for help; then he saddled and galloped up the

trail, with Bennie behind him, but some way behind, for Bennie's horse was getting weary.

When Bennie reached the pack train, Joe, the cook, had all the horses lined up facing back toward the station, ready to retreat if the fire came nearer. Everybody else had gone to fight the flames. So Bennie left his horse, too, and with stiff, aching legs, ran up the trail. As he drew near the scene, he could see, between him and the flames that were still confined to the smaller trees and the stuff on the forest floor, five men and two boys working like mad. Norman was digging a little ditch, while the rest, with axes and scout hatchets, were chopping down the small trees to make an open lane several feet wide. They had this lane and ditch cut across the direct path of the fire, and were swinging it around on each end, as if they were going to enclose the flames in a big ring. Bennie grabbed a hatchet, and went madly to work with the rest.

Nobody was wasting any breath talking. The fire was coming nearer all the time, and the nearer it came the hotter they grew. But when, in the centre, it reached the lane and ditch—and stopped, they gave a loud cheer, and worked all the harder to get around the two sides before it could spread out.

"If only the wind won't change!" the ranger did say, breathlessly, and then stooped to his work.

It is doubtful if they could have outflanked the fire, however, with only eight pairs of hands, if help had not arrived. Half a dozen men came galloping up, their horses rearing and snorting at sight of the flames,

and leaped off with spades and axes. With this new, fresh help, the fire was outflanked on the two sides, and as it moved more slowly back against the slight wind, they were able to get it under control.

When the danger was over, they paused, wiped their hot, dripping, dirty faces, and looked at the burned area.

It was hardly more than an acre in extent, but an acre, as Bennie said, is quite enough to dig a ditch around in a hurry, without proper tools.

"Thank the Lord it's no more," the ranger declared. "If you hadn't spotted it when you did, it would have worked down into those thicker pines over the knoll, and then we'd have been in for a real overhead fire, and no mistake. Once in there it would jump up into the big fellows."

"What I want to know is, what started it?" said Mr. Stone.

"Party went in ahead of you this morning, to fish at Marion Lake," said the ranger. "Cigarette, probably. Idiots! Snoop around there, Norman, and see what you can discover tonight. I'll be over in the morning myself. I want to stick by here tonight and make sure this doesn't blow up again. Well, boys, Uncle Sam is grateful to you, all right!"

They went back to the pack train, and then resumed their journey, crossing the black, smoking patch of the fire, and waving good-bye to the ranger and his helpers.

"Well, there are two precious hours gone," Norman growled. "We'll have to make camp in the dark."

"But we stopped a bad fire," said Bennie. "Aren't you glad?"

"Sure, I'm glad. But I hate to camp in the dark. Get up!"

He kicked his horse, and all the train behind picked up to a faster pace. They didn't hold it long, though, for the trail began to go up-hill presently, and the character of the forest to change. Instead of the big yellow pines, the path rose into a forest of smaller trees of many kinds, and shrubs, too. Spider did his best to pull off specimens of the foliage or needles as he rode past, so he could identify them. The guide would not let them stop.

Even at the top of the pass they were still in the forest, and could get no outlook. But as the trail grew level again, on the pass, they ran into snow-drifts and pools of water just melted. It was the first sign of anything cool that day. Over the pass the trail began to descend into a wild forest of big evergreens, and for the next few weary miles Bennie, for one, had little idea of where they went. He was dizzy from lack of food and his exertions in the heat, and he was so saddle sore that he had to keep shifting his weight to try to ease the stiffness. His bones and his head both ached. It was getting dark in the forest, too, whenever they had to go down into the bottom of a ravine. Nobody was saying a word, except the horse rustler, who kept yelling at the pack horses to make them hurry.

At last, when it seemed as if he couldn't stand his saddle another minute, and when it was so dark in the

deep, damp woods that Norman was almost invisible at the head of the train, they heard him call, "Turn left," and followed him down a side trail, so dim they would never have detected it in the dark.

A moment later there was light ahead, and they were on the shore of Marion Lake! The woods went right down to the water. There was no beach. The lake itself was a good-sized pond, perhaps a mile long, and across it rose up the snow-draped, needle-pointed spires of Three Fingered Jack, nearly 8,000 feet high. Nobody looked at the view, however; there was no time. The boys got out the tents and sleeping bags, the cook set up the stove and prepared food by lantern light. The doctor and Mr. Stone rustled wood. Norman and the helper took the horses off in the darkness to find a bit of open pasturage if they could. For half an hour, weary as they were, everybody worked like mad. And then, dirty as they were, they all rushed to the stove at the cry of "Come and get it!"

"I was never so hungry in my life," Bennie said.

"I ain't hungry any more," Dumplin' replied. "I was three hours ago, but now I'm past caring. I'm just a vacuum."

"Stomach or head?" his father asked.

The food had been cooked in a hurry, but nobody cared. Eating by lantern light and the glow from the stove door, they gobbled the bacon and swallowed the coffee in eager gulps.

"Glad Ma can't see my table manners now!" Spider remarked, his mouth full.

When the meal was over Norman went off again

through the trees to see if he could find the camp of the fishermen who possibly set the fire, and the rest lay on their backs by the water, discussing the exciting day. Norman came back to report that three men were camping around a headland, and he suspected one of them must have thrown away a cigarette, though they denied it.

"And to think," said the doctor, "that if we hadn't come along, the fire might have got a headway and burned thousands of acres, just because one man didn't have sense enough not to throw a cigarette butt into the brush! Some folks ought not to be allowed in the woods."

"Well, me for a bath and bed," said Mr. Stone. "I don't know which I need more."

The full moon was rising behind Three Fingered Jack when they all jumped into the lake, which was surprisingly shallow near shore, and had a good bath. Then they climbed wearily into their tents, and in two minutes they were in bed. But no sooner had they got snuggled down in the dark than there came a yell from the doctor.

"Here, get up, Bennie, and take that pup out of here! He's licking my face!"

"Oh, gee, he's all wet, and he's shaking himself on me," from Spider.

"Aw, let him sleep at my feet, Uncle Billy," from Bennie.

"No, sir; he'll hunt fleas in the night. I want a good sleep. You get up and take him outside!"

So poor Bennie got stiffly up again, and led Jeff out

of the tent, making him a little bed out of a canvas pack cover by the flap. Jeff curled up contentedly, with a good-night lick and whimper, and Bennie went back.

Already he could hear Spider breathing hard, and in one minute he, too, had dropped off like a soldier after a battle.

CHAPTER XXI

The Pack Train Has to Toboggan Into Hunt's Cove, and Bennie Puts "Action" Into It

THE next morning Bennie expected to be sore and stiff, but somehow he wasn't. He felt fine. The day began at sun-up with a plunge in the lake, and then an early start, because the horses hadn't had enough to eat, and Norman wanted to get to pasturage. It was a wonderful day for Spider. They were now on the western side of the Cascade Divide, the side on which the rain and snow falls all winter, so that the woods, instead of being dry, were as rich and dark and damp as an Adirondack forest. The yellow pines had vanished, but in their place were great cedars, and stands of Douglas fir trees bigger even than those on the way to Crater Lake. About the middle of the morning they picked their way down a steep, broken, rocky trail into a cañon, and at the bottom they rode for a long way through a forest of fir trees so big that when anybody rode around one, both horse and rider vanished from sight! These trees rose 150 feet without a limb, straight as masts, and they were over 200 feet tall.

"Some shrubs!" cried Bennie. "My neck's nearly broken trying to see the tops of 'em."

"How'd you like to shin up one, Bennie?" Mr. Stone called.

"I'd rather shin up it than saw it into wood for the stove," Bennie answered.

"Who owns these trees?" asked Spider.

"Your Uncle Sam," Norman called back.

"I'm glad of that. I hope they're never cut down. I wish everybody in America could see them, and know what trees are!"

"A lot of people in America would think they were dead before they could get here," Uncle Billy laughed. "We are some ways from civilization, Spider."

At noon they came to a natural meadow, and pastured the horses for two hours, while they themselves ate lunch. Then they pushed on. Late in the afternoon, when the boys were getting saddle sore and weary again, and everybody was hot and sweaty, Norman suddenly turned up the side of the cañon, by a dim trail through the bushes (there were few trees on this slope, due to an old fire). The trail was very steep, the horses sweated and panted, the pack horses had to be tugged and driven. For an hour they climbed, with frequent rests for breath, until the forests lay below them and the tumbled cañons, and they came into an open pasture near sunset time, a pasture full of glorious red and blue wild flowers and rich grass. They crossed this toward the east, still climbing, and suddenly came up over a crest into a second pasture, which was even fuller of flowers, and was the top of the mountain they had been climbing. But that wasn't what made them pull up their horses and shout.

What made them do that was what they saw apparently only two or three miles eastward—the great

white pyramid of Mount Jefferson, covered with cold, glittering snow, rising up and up against the sky, its summit needle flushed pink with sunset! It was a beautiful sight, but it was a tremendous sight, too. The mountain looked immense, terrific.

Bennie sobered after his first shout.

"Do you mean to say we are going to climb *that?*" he demanded.

"Surely," his uncle smiled.

Bennie, for once, made no reply whatever.

They went into camp immediately, above a big, fine spring on a slope of the meadow, which is called Minto Pasture. The horses were unsaddled and unloaded, hobbled, and sent out to graze their fill. Tents were strung between some trees on the edge of the big natural clearing. Dry wood was gathered, and supper got under way. They were more than 5,000 feet up here, and the minute the sun set it grew very cold, with a strong, bitter wind blowing down from the snow-draped mountain. There were snow-drifts in the woods beyond the spring. Everybody got into sweaters, and huddled around the boiling coffee-pot. Even Jeff snuggled up close to Bennie—but that might have been because he was hungry and was looking for food.

He got the scrapings from all the dishes, and the last batch of pancakes, which nobody else had room for, and then went bounding off again, barking and wheeling amid the grass and flowers.

"Great dog, that!" Bennie declared.

"Well, here come some cattle. Let's see how good a dog he is," Norman grinned, pointing up the pasture.

Sure enough, a herd of cattle, turned out to range wild during the summer, was breaking out of the woods.

"They'll be around all night, and walk all over camp, and get into the spring, if we don't chase 'em off," Norman went on. "Sic your sheep dog on 'em, Bennie."

Bennie whistled to Jeff, and then pointed to the cattle.

"Sic 'em, Jeff! Drive 'em away!" he said.

Jeff gave a yelp, jumped madly around in a circle—and then ran barking loudly directly toward a bird sitting in a low tree, singing its evening song!

"Yes, that's a great dog," remarked Uncle Billy.

"He certainly knows how to herd up cattle," Norman added.

"Maybe he's a bird dog, Bennie," said Spider.

"I know what he is," Dumplin' grinned. "He's a chickadee hound!"

"Aw, you make me sick," Bennie retorted. "Just 'cause he's a pup, and hasn't been trained yet. Come here, Jeff. Bite 'em!"

Jeff came back, as proudly as if he had herded the cattle instead of scaring one small bird, and once more he had to be put out of the tent, after everybody had got nicely to sleep.

The next morning the thermometer, which the doctor carried in a case with his aneroid barometer, registered only 38° at five o'clock. Everybody was glad to pile out and hustle around striking camp, to get warmed up for breakfast.

"Now, gentlemen, we've got our work cut out for us," said Norman, when they were ready to start. "Everything has been a picnic so far, but now we are going to run into the snow. I don't know whether we can make Hunt's Cove or not. It will depend on how good sports you are."

"If the last two days have been a picnic, I don't know whether I want to see your idea of working," said Bennie.

"Afraid?"

"Afraid, your grandmother. But I sure am sorry for poor old Dobbin," Bennie retorted.

Old Jefferson, which looked so near, wasn't so near as it looked, of course. Mountains never are. They descended gradually from Minto Pasture, through a "ghost forest" for two or three miles. A ghost forest is a forest which has been burned, without consuming the standing trunks. There the trees stood, thousands of them, but ghostly gray and dead—not a live branch, not a needle. Beyond this forest, they came out on a great plateau three miles wide, which was bare of everything except low bushes, wild flowers, a few snow-drifts and lava heaps, and a tiny brown tarn of water. The fire had done its work thoroughly here.

"Grizzly Flats, they call this," Norman said. "But I guess it's been a long time since any grizzlies were seen here."

"What a fire this must have been!" Spider was saying, when Bennie suddenly cried, "Sh!"

"What is it?"

"Somebody's following us over the trail on a motorcycle," he answered. "Don't you hear?"

It certainly sounded that way. Far off they heard the roaring buzz of an unmuffled engine.

"An aeroplane!" Spider exclaimed.

They halted, listening and watching. A moment later, flying fairly low, the plane came over Minto Mountain behind them, and swept toward Grizzly Flats. As if he saw them, and wanted to tell them so, the aviator swooped a bit over their heads, then rose again, banked against the white wall of Jefferson, and swung off to the north.

"*What* is he doing here?" the boys exclaimed.

"It's one of the new aeroplane forest patrol," Norman said. "They go out every day now, in the dry season, to spot fires. We haven't had a bad fire—not one of the old-fashioned big blazes, since they started in. They can get up and see into all the cañons, everywhere, every day, and get back with the tip in no time."

"But what would they do if they had to land?" asked Spider.

"I guess it's up to them not to have to land," Norman answered. "I don't want the job—but it's a great work, just the same."

"Well, I'll say war isn't the only risky thing," put in Bennie. "That guy ought to have a medal for flying over this country every day."

The plane had disappeared. They pushed on, and soon found themselves at the edge of Grizzly Flats. Right below them the land dropped at an angle of

fifty or sixty degrees for a thousand feet, into a deep hole. Directly across this hole it went up again, and up and up and up, for the other side was Mount Jefferson. They were only a mile from the wall of the mountain, but for all they could see, they might as well have been a hundred miles. It looked quite impossible to take horses down that slope. To the right and left were dense woods which the fire hadn't burned, and these woods were full of snow. The hole below them, called Hunt's Cove, was carpeted with snow. The great pyramid of Jefferson opposite them was blinding white with snow.

"You wait here," said Norman, "while I prospect."

He went off to the south, into the woods, and they saw his horse climbing up over the drifts. Uncle Billy got out his field-glasses, lay on his stomach with his elbows firmly on the ground at the rim of the precipice, and began a long, careful study of the slopes of Mount Jefferson. He was very grave about it, and didn't say a word, except now and then in a low voice to Dumplin's father. The three boys wandered along the rim, wondering how Norman was going to find a way down. They couldn't see any trace of a trail. Wherever the slope was enough off the perpendicular to hold a trail, it was covered with snow.

Norman didn't return for nearly an hour. When he finally came back, he said, "Well, I think I've found a way, if you care to risk it. I'll risk the horses."

"As bad as that, eh?" the doctor replied. "Well, if you'll try it, we will. I think I've found a way up

the mountain, too, though I don't like the looks of certain rock slides down that big west snow-field."

"But why do we go on the big west snow-field?" the boys asked. "Looks as if we could just go right up the southwest shoulder."

"Look sharp at the summit pinnacle, Bennie," the doctor said, handing him the glasses.

Bennie looked. All he said was "Wow!" and passed them to Dumplin'.

"Do we climb *that?*" Dumplin' demanded.

"We do, if we get to the top of Jefferson," the doctor answered. "You see, that top peak, or pinnacle, is absolutely straight up and down. It's just a slab of lava set up on edge and covered with snow and ice. The only place it can possibly be climbed is on the northern end, so we've got to get around to the northern end. My plan is to go up from Hunt's Cove by the southwest spur to the 7,000-foot level, where the permanent snow begins, then traverse the big west snow-field and get up on that first northwest shoulder, which apparently leads us right up to the north end of the pinnacle. It looks possible. Well, Norman, we're ready."

Norman led the way southward into the woods at the rim of the Cove. As soon as they were in the deep shadows of the evergreens, they were on snow, and deep snow. Some drifts were still as much as ten feet deep, and so hard that the horses barely sank over their hoofs.

"The trail is somewhere underneath us," Norman called back.

He traveled for almost a mile above the rim, and then led the way over. By zigzagging through the woods, on the steeply pitched snow, they were able to ride about half the way down. Then he called for them all to dismount.

"Want to get a good motion picture, Mr. Stone?" he asked.

"Sure."

The big camera was unpacked, and Norman and Mr. Stone disappeared with it, down the steep pitch ahead. Ten minutes later Norman came back.

"Now," said he, "each man lead his horse. Keep as far away from him as you can, and jump fast, or he'll step on you. Go in single file, and Joe and Bill you go last and drive the pack horses ahead of you. Come on—follow me."

They pitched down a few feet through the evergreens, and came to the top of a long, straight, open chute, like a ski run cut in the woods, covered deep with snow, and descending 500 feet to the very bottom of Hunt's Cove. It was evidently the path of an old landslide. Part way down, at one side, Mr. Stone had set up his camera, and was ready to shoot them as they went past him.

"Ready? Go!" cried Norman, and over the edge he went, dragging his horse.

Bennie followed, and Spider and Dumplin' and the doctor, and the pack horses, and the rest, in single file. Two jumps, and you were speeding up. Three jumps, and the horses were going ten feet at a plunge, snorting and slipping and sometimes going through the

snow to their bellies, and the boys, ahead of them, were leaping from side to side madly to keep out of the way of their iron-shod, plunging hoofs.

As he passed the camera, Bennie heard the crank grinding, and the laughing voice of Mr. Stone crying, "More action, Bennie!"

Bennie was about to make some reply, when his foot slipped, and he turned a superb somersault, and only was stopped from rolling the rest of the way to the bottom because he kept hold of his horse's bridle.

It was all over in two minutes, but it was certainly lively while it lasted. Then all the horses, their legs wet, shivering and trembling with nervousness, stood huddled at the foot of the chute, and Mr. Stone was seen descending with his camera. Bennie sprang back up the slope to get the tripod.

"Say, that beats skiing!" he cried, "and I sure got some more action for you, Mr. Stone."

"You did," the man laughed. "You did! That was the best action picture I ever took."

They found at the bottom of Hunt's Cove a small open meadow, boggy now with melted snow and full of white cowslips and running brooks, but full, also, of fresh grass for the horses, and all around the meadow deep forests of fir trees and deep drifts. Among the trees, beside a rushing stream of ice cold water, and in a dry place between drifts, they pitched their tents.

There was no danger of a fire spreading here, with the snow all around, so they built a roaring camp fire between the tents, and while the dinner was being

cooked the doctor got from his pack a box of spikes, and they began to fix their shoes for the climb.

Uncle Billy fixed his first, to show them how. As the heavy soles of his boots were already studded thick with sharp hobs, he didn't have to put in any short spikes. But into each sole, with the help of a key wrench, he screwed eight sharp steel spikes more than an inch long, and four more into each heel.

"I'd hate to be catching when you tried to slide for home," Bennie said. "Those are wicked looking hoofs!"

"Now make yours just as wicked. And be sure you get the spikes in straight and firm," his uncle answered. "Everything on this trip so far has been a mere picnic to what we are going to get tomorrow. It's not only going to be the hardest work you ever did in your life, but the most dangerous. We can't have anything wrong with our equipment."

Everybody who didn't already have plenty of sharp hobs in his boots also screwed in a large number of short steel spikes, in addition to the long ones. Then all the shoes were freshly oiled, to make them as nearly water-proof as possible, and Uncle Billy got out the amber goggles, to see if they were unbroken. He also produced a stick of grease paint.

"What's that for? Are we going to act in a play?" Dumplin' asked.

"No, but we are going to paint our faces, just the same. You'll be glad enough of this stick before the sun sets tomorrow."

After supper the cook made ready six small pack-

ages of lunch, for Norman was going to make the climb, too, and the doctor wound up his alarm clock.

"Bed, boys!" he ordered.

"Oh, no, not yet!"

"Who's captain here? Bed, I said! We get up at three o'clock sharp tomorrow morning."

"Say, it's worse than a bear hunt," Dumplin' groaned.

"You'll think it is, by the time we get back to camp tomorrow night," the doctor smiled. "I have a hunch that even Bennie is going to get enough exercise, for once."

"Ho," said Bennie, "Uncle Billy's trying to scare us! Can I take Jeff along, Uncle, up his own mountain?"

"It might be a good way to get rid of him," the doctor answered. "But if you *don't* want to get rid of him, I advise you to tie him up in camp."

"I wonder if Uncle Billy is trying to scare us?" Bennie whispered to Spider as they got ready for bed. "Don't seem as if the old mountain was so bad as all that."

Spider was very sober. "I had a good look at it through the glasses yesterday," he replied. "I don't mind saying right now that it's got me scared. Remember those pictures in the book at home?"

"You mean the old Spitzes, and things? Sure!"

"Well, we're going to get some of that stuff ourselves tomorrow."

"Hooray!" said Bennie. "The real thing beats a book."

But he began to think of the pictures as he was going to sleep, pictures of men clinging to precipices with awful depths below them, and in his dreams he was falling, falling, falling ——

CHAPTER XXII

The First Attempt at Jefferson—Dumplin' Almost Falls to Death—the Hardest Work the Boys Ever Did

HE was falling into a terrible black cañon where there was a loud noise of whirling water—and he woke to hear the alarm clock buzzing. The grip of the bad dream was still on him, and he was shivering a little, as Uncle Billy got up and lit the lantern in the tent. It was pitch dark in the woods outside, and still as death. But as they dressed, the three could hear Mr. Stone and Dumplin' dressing in their tent, and then the sound of the cook starting the breakfast fire. Those who were to make the climb put on light shoes, for they were going to use the horses as far as timber line. They came out of the tents wearing their heavy sweaters, for it was bitterly cold, and washing by the brook was a very sketchy job. Nobody even suggested a bath.

While breakfast was cooking, they huddled around the stove. Meanwhile the horse rustler had gone up into the open meadow to round up six saddle horses. He was bringing them back as they ate their bacon and drank their coffee by lantern light, still huddled around the stove. As soon as the horses were saddled, each member of the party put his lunch into his pack, slung

a canteen over his shoulder, tied his climbing boots over the saddle horn, took his alpenstock in his hand, like a lance, made sure he also had his colored goggles, and mounted.

"I feel like Sir Launcelot," cried Dumplin', tipping his alpenstock forward, like a knight about to tilt.

"I'd hate to tell you what you *look* like," Bennie laughed. "Did Sir Launcelot carry his boots on his saddle?"

Bennie was the last one into the saddle, because he had to catch Jeff and tie him up. "Don't let him loose till we've been gone a couple of hours," he called back to the cook. "Don't want him to follow us and break his neck."

The sleepy cook grunted, and Jeff whined and moaned and tugged at his improvised rope collar, as Bennie patted him good-bye and climbed into the saddle.

It was still dark in the woods as they moved out of camp, but out in the open meadow of the cove there was a kind of gray daylight. Norman and the doctor led the way, putting the horses across the creek, and heading them for the steep side wall opposite the chute they had descended the day before.

This wall, when they came to it, was not so steep, however, as the chute. It had once been burned over, too, so that there was no timber except some dead, fallen stuff, and no snow. They zigzagged up it quickly, and at the top, looking over a two-mile gentler slope of low forest, they saw again the snow-white cone of the mountain rising up against the sky—or,

rather, they half saw it, for the white clouds were swirling around it.

"They'll lift with the sun," said Norman. "Don't worry."

For the next hour, the horses plodded upward, over deep, hard snow, packed in huge drifts under the evergreen trees, which got smaller and smaller as they approached timber line. What had looked like an easy slope from below turned out to be full of short but steep pitches, over lava ledges, and if it had not been for the snow they could hardly have taken the horses up without endless zigzagging.

It was bright morning when they reached timber line, on the southwestern shoulder of the mountain, but as yet the sun had not reached them, of course, being cut off by the great bulk of the cone. They tied the horses to the last little trees, where the poor creatures would have to stay, without food or water, till night. Then they put on their heavy, spiked boots, shouldered their packs, canteens and cameras, the doctor with his coil of alpine rope, and set out for the summit above them, around which the clouds were scudding at a tremendous pace, driven by a strong west wind.

"How high up are we now?" Spider asked.

"About 7,000 feet, I should guess," the doctor answered.

"Then we've got about 3,500 feet to climb," Spider reckoned. "That's not as much as Mount Washington from Bretton Woods or the Crawford House. You climb 4,200 there."

"It's 700 feet less," said Bennie. "Gee, I'm good at arithmetic."

"The only difference being that this is the second hardest snow climb in the United States (excluding Alaska, of course), and we are tackling it by a route which, so far as I know, nobody has ever tried before," the doctor smiled.

"What's the hardest?" Bennie asked.

"The north side of Mount Baker in Washington, up the Roosevelt Glacier," his uncle answered.

"You been up there?"

"Yes."

"Gee, I'd like to!"

"Suppose you do this one first," said his uncle, "and suppose you follow me, instead of racing ahead."

Bennie fell back into line.

They had reached a long, upward-stretching snowfield now, which the doctor said was the foot of permanent snow. It never melted entirely away. It was frozen now so hard that it held them up, and the long spikes were needed, or they would have slipped. They had to jam their alpenstocks hard down to set them into it. It led upward for a quarter of a mile or so, to a spine of broken, naked lava. As they climbed this slope, they could look back into the hole of Hunt's Cove—or they could look where the cove was. They could only see it by flashes, as it were, because whole seas of billowing white clouds were driving in over Minto Mountain, crossing above the cove, and hitting Jefferson just below them. As these clouds hit, they seemed to get thinner, slid right up the snow slope

past the climbers, like white snow, and blew off into blue space over the peak.

Spider, who was watching them slide up the snowfields, suddenly cried, "Look! Look at the summit!"

Everybody looked upward. The sun had evidently risen now, and as the clouds reached the top of the mountain they ran into its rays. The angle was just right to refract the rays down to the climbers, and the result was that the summit peak of the mountain was haloed with a beautiful rainbow. This rainbow lasted for ten minutes or more, and then the sun got too high, and it disappeared.

By the time they reached the lava spine, the clouds were thinner, and the wind had died down. They were warmed up with climbing, too, and took off their sweaters. The doctor got out the rope, and proceeded to make six loops in it, tied with knots which couldn't slip. The loops were about fifteen or twenty feet apart. He put the first loop under his own arms; then came Bennie, then Dumplin', then Mr. Stone, then Spider, and last of all, Norman. Everybody then covered his face with grease paint, putting it especially thick on noses and lips, and donned colored goggles.

Then the doctor spoke. "Now, boys," he said, "from this point on you must obey orders quickly and without question. You must do exactly what I tell you to, and nothing else. There are two things to remember, above everything. Number one is this,—every second man on the rope must have his stock

driven in deep and firm, with a good grip on it, when the man in front takes his stock out to make a step, and he mustn't pull his stock out of the snow till the man ahead has made the step and driven *his* stock in again. If you do that, you see, fifty per cent of us will always be anchored, if anybody slips. If I find you cannot or will not obey this rule, I'll stop the climb at once. The second thing is:—never let the rope get taut between you and the next man, so it can yank either of you, and never let it get slack enough to trip anybody. Keep it sagging, but not dragging. Now, all set!"

Uncle Billy spoke sternly. The boys knew he meant what he said, and that it was serious business ahead. They followed him carefully down the north side of the lava spine, and found themselves on a steep slope of pumice and fine conglomerate, like a mixture of gravel and wood ashes, hung at such a sharp angle that it just did stay there, and that was all. It hung at what is called the angle of repose. As Uncle Billy started out across it, to get to the snow slope beyond, Bennie noticed that every time he put his foot down, the stuff below him started slipping a little. Bennie looked down the mountain to see what would happen if they started a slide and all slipped. A hundred feet below the snow began again, and ran down for a thousand feet or more, smooth as glass, and ended at the top of a precipice! Below that, all he could see was a hole! Something went flipflop in the pit of his stomach at the sight, and he looked quickly away, just in time to see that if he didn't step out, the rope

between his uncle and himself would be pulled taut. So he had to walk ahead, on to the treacherous slope. It was exactly like running tiddly-benders on thin ice, only instead of the danger of going through into water was the danger of starting a landslide and going down with it. You could feel with every step the sickening start of the slide.

However, everybody got across to the snow.

"Well, I'm glad *that's* over!" exclaimed Mr. Stone. "That conglomerate is hung exactly at the angle of repose. One degree more tilt, and she'd slide off into the cañon. Where do we go from here?"

The doctor pointed to the great west snow-field that lay between them and a high shoulder, which extended toward the northwest.

"We have to traverse that snow-field," he said.

Everybody looked at it. Between them and it were four or five little snow slopes, each about a hundred yards wide, and separated by ridges of broken lava fragments. The great west snow-field itself looked to be a quarter of a mile wide, or even more. It was practically unbroken, except for one island of lava near the middle, looked smooth as glass, was tilted at an angle of more than forty-five degrees, and stretched right up to the precipice of the summit pinnacle, and right down to the top of the precipice which dropped to the cañon. If you slipped when you were out on it, and started down, it was certain death. Bennie didn't need to be told a second time why fifty per cent of the climbers must have their alpenstocks driven in at every step!

The doctor now took his scout ax out of the sheath at his belt, and stepped out on the first snow-field. Being on the western side of the mountain the sun had not yet touched it, of course, and even when he drove his boot down hard, he could not make enough of an impression for a good footing. So, holding his stock in his right hand and driving it deep into the snow at each stride, he leaned down and with the ax in his left hand cut out a chunk of snow—one blow inward against the slope, and a second downward. This took out the chunk in such a way that a very small but level step was made. He reached as far ahead as he could, and the steps were three feet apart.

Bennie watched him carefully, glad not to look either up or down the terrifying slope. While his uncle was cutting, with his stock driven in, Bennie took a step behind him and drove his stock deep. Then he waited, clinging to it, while the doctor pulled his stock out and moved one step ahead. As the doctor cut and moved, cut and moved, Bennie discovered that there was a regular rhythm to it, and the only way to keep this rhythm unbroken was to pull your stock up at the right instant—that is, when you saw the man ahead drive his in. If you delayed doing it, you broke the rhythm. But to pull your stock up at the right instant wasn't so easy as it sounds. Once driven two feet deep into the packed snow, the sharp point wedged there almost like a nail in wood. You had to pull it out with one hand, and pull it out quickly, without stopping your stride and above all

without upsetting your balance on the tiny, icy steps. It took muscle. It took a lot of muscle, and it strained your back and shoulder.

When they all were across the first snow slope, and were resting a moment on the lava spine, Uncle Billy said, "Well, Bennie, how do you like it so far? Getting any exercise yet?"

"I always thought you climbed mountains with your legs," Bennie answered. "But I feel as if I was climbing with my back and shoulder. Gosh, it's hard work pulling that old alpenstock out!"

"They say a good mountain climber is a combination of a weak head and a strong back," his uncle laughed.

"Too bad, Bennie, your back isn't very strong," said Dumplin'.

"Well, if your back is strong, you'll be able to scale Mount Everest," Bennie retorted.

They moved out now across the second small snowfield, and then the third and fourth. They were working upward a little, as well as across, and the summit precipices grew nearer. Bennie looked up once at those cliffs towering almost over his head, absolutely precipitous and hung with ice—and looked quickly down again. Jefferson hadn't seemed very hard to climb from a distance, but now that summit looked absolutely impossible, and sure death if you tried it. He preferred to keep his eyes on his uncle, who was methodically cutting steps across the frozen snow.

They rested a moment, and took a drink from the canteens, on the last lava spine before they tackled the

big snow-field. Uncle Billy looked out across it with troubled eyes.

"I don't like those two chutes down the centre," he said, pointing to a couple of deep scars, like ditches, which started far up at the base of the pinnacle cliffs, swept down the middle of the field, and only ended at the top of the cañon wall far below.

"Nothing coming down 'em now," Norman said. "I don't believe there will be till the sun gets around this side. It's coming down tonight that we'll be in danger."

"What has made them?" Spider asked. "They look like toboggan slides."

"That's about what they are. They are made by big hunks of lava and ice breaking off the pinnacle and sliding down, digging a chute as they go."

"How fast do the hunks travel?" asked Dumplin'.

"Fast enough!" Norman laughed.

But Dumplin' didn't laugh. He looked up that terrific incline to the ice-capped summit precipices, and said, "Do we have to cross those chutes?"

"We do if we want to climb Jefferson," the doctor answered.

"Tell Mamma I was a good boy," Dumplin' groaned.

"Shut up!" said his father, sharply. "Uncle Billy knows what he's about."

Without further words, the doctor started out on to the big snow-field, cutting steps as he went. Bennie followed, his arm and shoulder aching now, his heart thumping a little in his chest as he thought of those

chutes ahead. When they reached the first one, it turned out to be about six feet deep and eight feet wide. The sides were almost straight, and the snow on the bottom was packed hard and smooth.

His uncle beckoned Bennie up to him.

"Drive in your stock," he said, "and play me out on the rope. If we hear anything coming, take up the slack, and haul me back to you."

He started cutting steps down the side, across the bottom, and up the farther side. Nothing happened, and once across, he cut a good firm step to brace his foot on, faced back toward the chute, told Dumplin' to come up to Bennie, and then he took up the slack of rope between himself and Bennie, while Dumplin' played out the rope behind. In this way, everybody got across.

"Well, that's that," said the doctor, with a sigh of relief. "Now for the next one."

The next chute turned out to be just about the same size, and they crossed it slowly and cautiously, by the same method. Again nothing happened, and soon they were at the lava island, which turned out to be much nearer the northwest shoulder than it had looked. Here they sank down on some firm rock to rest, and while they rested, the sun peeped over the shoulder of the mountain south of them, and almost instantly the snow all around leaped into a blinding dazzle. The boys, who had taken their colored glasses off, put them hurriedly on again.

The doctor laughed. "Not much dust up here—the snow stays clean and reflects the light," he said.

"Pretty soon you'll be yelling for more grease paint, too."

When they started on again, it was boiling hot. In spite of the glasses, their eyes began to smart, for the dazzle got in around the edges, and their faces and necks to burn.

"And now the real business is beginning," the doctor said, heading directly from the lava island to the base of the northwest shoulder.

Bennie took one look at that shoulder, and cried, "Do we climb that?"

"Sure thing."

"Well, if you say so, I suppose we do. But I'm no human fly."

Ahead of them was an unbroken wall of snow, the side of a vast drift which had blown over the shoulder. It was about three hundred feet high, and the angle couldn't have been less than sixty-five degrees. If you will tip a board or a ruler up to an angle of sixty-five degrees, and then imagine that slope to be hard, icy snow crust, with a drop of two or three thousand feet to the bottom of a cañon below you, you've got some idea of what the climbers were up against.

But the doctor went right ahead, cutting steps. He was chopping almost opposite his face, the slope was so steep. Bennie, watching him, had to tip his head way back, as you would to watch a man ahead of you on a ladder. He kept his head tipped back, too. He tried one look downward—and no more. All he saw was the top of Dumplin's cap—and then the white snow slope sliding away to the hole of the cañon. He swal-

lowed hard and bit his lips, which had already begun to swell and crack.

"I will *not* get scared," he whispered to himself. "I will *not* get scared!"

The dazzle of the snow was now right in their faces, because the slope was so steep, and they could actually feel the reflected rays blister their noses. Their eyes smarted, their lips were cracking. But nobody had any time or chance to do anything about it. There was enough to do without that. Every second man had to be absolutely sure his stock was driven deep when the man above him took an upward step, and he had to pull out his own stock and drive it in firmly on a level with his face (no small muscular task) when it was his turn to take an upward step. The doctor was cutting good, high steps, too, a couple of feet to a rise. Bennie ached in every joint, and felt as if he were balancing on the edge of eternity—as, indeed, he was! But he climbed grimly, steadily, keeping the alternate rhythm with the doctor.

There was no chance to rest here. For half an hour they crawled up. Mr. Stone said he'd like a movie of it, but there didn't seem to be any way to take a movie of it. It wasn't safe for anybody to get off the rope; in fact, it would have been sheer recklessness. Bennie was never so glad of anything in his life as he was of his uncle's call, "The top!" He scrambled up over the edge of a great drift, and found himself on a narrow spine of snow and lava blocks, a spine leading straight up to the northern end of the summit pinnacle.

When the rest were over the rim, they took off the

rope, and sat down to rest on a lava platform. The wind had died down. It was calm and cloudless now, and there wasn't a sound in the world—not a whisper of wind, not a bird song—nothing but the stillness of the everlasting snows, and their own voices, which sounded strange up here, almost startling.

The doctor took out his instrument for measuring altitude, called an aneroid barometer. It showed that they were over 9,000 feet. Their watches told them it was one o'clock.

"Wow, we've been climbing more'n nine hours since breakfast!" said Bennie. "I wouldn't have guessed it."

"Funny, I don't feel very hungry," said Dumplin'.

"That *is* funny," his father laughed.

"It's the funniest thing he ever said," Bennie added. "Didn't hear you making many jokes coming up that old drift just now, Dump."

"You won't hear me making *any* jokes till we get down this mountain again," Dump replied. "Gee, my lips are all cracked, and my nose feels as big as a house, and my back aches, and my eyes smart, and I haven't got any wind and—and ——"

He paused for breath.

"But except for that you're feeling fine, eh?" Uncle Billy smiled. "Well, out with the lunches, everybody. We've got to eat and be on our way. We ought to have got here by eleven o'clock. But maybe we can go faster now. The snow is getting soft, and I won't have to cut steps, and the shoulder won't be very steep."

They ate their lunches, huddled on the shady side of the lava block, to keep out of the sun glare, put more grease paint on their lips, noses, cheeks and necks, and set out again up the shoulder. The sun had been shining up here for several hours, and the snow was softened. Their feet sank ankle deep into it, in fact, and in a short distance it had soaked through their boots so that their feet were wet and cold, while their faces were burning. The pitch of the shoulder, too, turned out to be much steeper than they had reckoned. Even the doctor and Norman were fooled, old hands that they were at mountain climbing. It was so steep that the doctor kept them roped, and it grew steeper as they toiled slowly upward, like tiny black ants on the vast white expanse of the mountain. It was almost three o'clock when they reached a big jagged pyramid of lava which stuck up above the snow, just below the summit pinnacle, and found a level spot in its lee. Here the doctor gathered them together into a group, and pointed to the pinnacle, without at first saying a word.

Bennie looked up a forty-five degree slope of dazzling snow, frozen into little wind ripples like desert sand, for two or three hundred feet, and saw that slope end at the base of the pinnacle itself. The pinnacle, as he could see only too plainly now, was a sheer precipice at every place except the edge just above them. That edge—the north end, which the shoulder they were climbing on led to, was just enough off the perpendicular to make it a daring and desperate hazard. Even it, in some places, looked perfectly straight

up. And those places were not snow covered, as Bennie could now see. They were just green, glistening ice! The pinnacle rose thus for a full 300 feet, into the naked blue sky.

Dumplin' groaned. "I can't do it," he said. "Honest, Dad, I can't do it! I didn't say anything, but I got dizzy back on the shoulder, and my head's aching now. Gosh, I don't want to look at it!"

He turned quickly away. Bennie started to laugh, but stopped himself when he saw his uncle's face.

"Sit down, Dumplin'," the doctor said kindly. "You won't have to climb it. Rest a bit, and don't think about it. None of us is going to climb it."

"Oh, why not?" Bennie exclaimed. "It doesn't look to me as if anybody *could* climb it, but if they have, I guess we can, with you to lead us. Gee, think of getting this far, and stopping!"

"How long do you think it would take us to go from here to the top?" his uncle asked.

"Half an hour."

"An hour," Spider amended.

Norman laughed, and said nothing.

"It would take nearly two hours up, from this point, and two hours down," said the doctor. "If you boys were all skilled climbers, and one of you could cut the steps, we might do it in an hour and a half each way. But I wouldn't let even Norman cut the steps on that pinnacle—he's not done enough ice climbing. And I'm pretty well fagged already. Besides, it's three o'clock. If we didn't get back to this spot till seven, where do you think we'd spend the night?

Want to spend it up on these snow-fields, with soaked shoes, and no food, no fire and no blankets?"

"No, and I don't particularly want to go down that shoulder wall and cross those chutes after dark, either," Norman said. "It'll be dark before we get to the horses if we start back now."

"Give me one shot at the pinnacle, and I'm with you," Mr. Stone said, pointing his camera.

Bennie and Spider turned reluctantly away. It seemed tough to get up 10,000 feet, almost to the very base of the summit pinnacle, and then have to turn back.

"It's like being licked, when you still have a punch left," Bennie said.

"We were licked by daylight, not by the mountain," his uncle answered.

The descent of the shoulder to the lava block where they had eaten lunch, which Bennie and Spider had expected to make in rapid time, was just as slow as the ascent. The pitch was so steep that they did not dare to come down facing forward. They had to face up the slope, and sink their feet into their old tracks, as you come down a ladder.

At the lava block, Mr. Stone shifted to number one on the rope, so he could be the first down the wall of the drift, and get a movie of the rest. Bennie stayed at number two, Dumplin' at three, Uncle Billy took number four place, then Spider, and finally Norman. The doctor told them, before they started down, how to make the descent, using the steps cut that morning. You faced sideways to the wall of snow, drove in

your stock firmly, and then sank your left foot to the lower step, got a good footing, sank your right foot also, and then pulled out your stock and drove it home again lower down. Everybody was cautioned to keep the rhythm, and not to pull out his stock till the man above had made his step and anchored again.

When they were ready, Mr. Stone slipped over the edge, and Bennie had a sickening feeling as he saw him disappear. When the rope was played nearly out, Bennie started. That first step took his nerve more than anything all day. With his stock driven into the snow at the very edge, he had to look down to see where to place his foot, and in doing so, he had to see past the step, fifteen feet down to the top of Mr. Stone's hat, and then 300 feet to the bottom of the drift, and then the long, white shoot of the snow-field to the cañon hole! For one instant, Bennie's knees shook. Then he got a brace on himself, and began slowly, cautiously, to creep down, testing each footing before he pulled out his stock.

As soon as Dumplin' appeared above him, he kept an eye upward, to make sure that his stock was always driven in when Dumplin' changed position. And he soon found, too, that Dumplin' was coming very slowly.

"Poor old Dump," Bennie thought, "I bet he's too fat for this kind of work. I must be careful not to go fast, and yank the rope. Might pull him off."

They were about half-way down, and Bennie had just driven his stock hard in, waiting for Dumplin' to shift, when he saw the snow under Dump's foot begin-

ning to cave. The step had melted since morning, and grown weak, and the boy, besides, had got his weight too much on the very edge. Dumplin' felt it give, too, and with a little cry tried to get his alpenstock driven in again.

"Dumplin's slipping! Hold him, Uncle Billy!" Bennie called.

Even as he spoke, the step gave way, and Dumplin's alpenstock, which he hadn't been braced to drive deep enough, gave way also. Dumplin' began to drop! Bennie saw him coming directly down. If he kept on, he would hit him, and both of them would go! It was a sickening instant, while Bennie leaned in against the snow, braced both feet, and clung with both hands to his stock.

But Dumplin' dropped only four or five feet, and hung there, against the slope, while Uncle Billy's voice came down, cool and steady, "Don't drop your stock! Get your foot back on a step, Dumplin'. Keep your head!"

It was all over so quickly that Bennie could hardly realize for a second just what had happened. Of course, Uncle Billy had been anchored, and when Dump slipped, he could only go the length of the slack between him and the doctor! Bennie really knew that when he called up to his uncle. But he had forgotten everything but his instinct to cling to his stock when Dumplin' had actually begun to fall. He felt suddenly sick and faint.

Then he said to himself, "This is no place to be sick on! Get on to your job!"



Looking Across Hunt's Cove to Jefferson. Dotted Line Shows Route of Climb.
Arrow Points to Place Where Dumplin' Slipped

He heard the doctor above and Mr. Stone below encouraging Dumplin', too, and he knew it was up to him.

"Some old rope, Dumplin', if it can hold you that way," he shouted. "Come on, now, steady. I'll kick the steps out bigger so's they won't break again."

He kicked and packed them vigorously as he descended, and soon Mr. Stone was at the bottom, and he was within fifteen feet of it. Mr. Stone asked them to stop for a minute while he got out of the rope and went fifty feet out on the traverse, and took a movie of the final stages of the descent.

When he got back, Dumplin' was sitting on the snow, very pale, but grinning as cheerfully as he could.

"Rope kind of yanked me under the arms," he said. "But I'm all right. I won't be so dizzy now we're down. I couldn't see very well, and I guess I didn't get my foot far enough in on the step. It was looking down got my goat."

The doctor and his father patted his back, and once more shifted positions on the rope.

"Once we get across those chutes, and it's plain sailing," Uncle Billy said, as he prepared to start out across the big snow-field, on the little path of steps he had cut that morning. Bennie noticed that there was a red ring around his left hand, and realized that he had seized the rope with a lightning twist when Dumplin' slipped, and caught the weight that way, before the yank came on his body, and before Dumplin' could get up speed.

"He's some quick thinker," Bennie reflected. "Gee, I guess you have to be, in this game."

They were now out on the big traverse. Their morning steps were melted out deeper and larger, and they made fairly rapid progress toward the first chute. Nothing had come down it while they were approaching, and nothing came as the doctor crossed. But, once on the other side, he took his large jack-knife from his pocket, opened it, and held it ready to cut the rope as the others crossed, for if something should come down large enough to stick up above the sides while the rope was stretched across the chute, it might pull them all down with it. Nothing at all happened, however, either here or in the second big chute. Once across the latter, Uncle Billy gave a sigh of relief.

"Well, *that's* over!" he said. "Now we have plain sailing."

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when they heard a crackle and roar far up on the pinnacle precipice. Looking quickly upward, they saw snow powder, like white smoke, rising from the base of the cliff, and something descending toward them, not in the chute at all, but on top of the smooth snow!

"Run for it!" Bennie instinctively cried, taking a step forward that nearly yanked Dumplin' off his feet again.

"Stop!" the doctor cried, in a sharp command. "Don't you dare give orders again! Don't try to run! You'll have us all down. Watch it, till we see just where it is coming, and how big it is. Let it come between us if we have to, and if it's too big to pass

under the rope, I'll cut. Stand ready to hold the rope up, or move as I tell you to!"

The thing was coming toward them, piling up snow in front of it. This piling up of the snow impeded its progress and diminished its speed. It had to push its way. Instead of coming a mile a minute, as the boys expected it would, it came slowly enough to give them time to estimate where it would pass.

"Move ahead!" the doctor snapped. "Easy, now —don't try to run. Don't forget your stocks—don't pull on the rope. Steady!"

They moved forward several steps, and just as Norman, the last one on the rope, took a long, quick stride of two steps instead of one, the great hunk of lava, as big as a molasses hogshead, went slowly but inexorably downward, over the very spot where, a few seconds before, they had stood! Slowly as it moved, pushing the snow ahead, and piling it out on the sides, nothing could have stood in its path. They watched it go on down, leaving a track two feet deep behind it.

"There's chute number three just started," Norman said.

They heard another crack and roar on the pinnacle as he spoke, and looking up again saw something starting down one of the big chutes behind them.

"Say, let's get out of here!" Dumplin' cried. "I don't like this."

"I'm not stuck on it myself," Uncle Billy answered. "Forward, march!"

They plugged ahead to the first lava spine, and rested a minute, looking back over the traverse. The

sun was sinking, and its rays hit the slope almost level, making dark shadows of their steps, like a long row of dots out across the great field of white. These dots crossed the traverse, and then went straight up the shoulder, and in that light the shoulder looked as perpendicular as the side of a house.

"Did we go up there?" Spider exclaimed.

Dumplin' took one look, and remarked, with such a heartfelt expression that everybody laughed, "Gosh, I don't believe it!"

But there was no time for a long rest. Tired as they were, they had to keep on going, for they were still a long way from camp.

As they started across the first of the five smaller snow traverses, it seemed to Bennie as if his back and shoulders were one big ache every time he had to pull out his stock from the sticky snow. Yet Uncle Billy was moving ahead with a regular stride, and he *had* to get his stock in and then out with one firm motion, or else lose the step, fall behind, and make the rope yank his uncle. He gritted his teeth and told himself that he *would not* let that happen.

As they stepped up on the second lava spine, Bennie cried, "Hello, old lava!"

As they reached the third spine, Dumplin' cried, "Hello, old lava!"

As they reached the fourth, Spider cried, "Hello, old lava!"

"You boys seem to be glad you're getting down," the doctor called back.

"We're glad we're getting where we don't have to

pull these stocks out of the snow in time to your steps," Bennie replied.

"Sorry to go so fast—but we must get to the horses before dark," his uncle answered.

At last they were creeping over the treacherous slope of pumice, they were up the southwest shoulder —they were on the lower snow-field which sloped more gradually to timber line and the horses!

"Rope off!" the doctor called.

He coiled it up and hung it over his shoulder.

"Now, each man for himself," said he, starting down with huge strides, his boots sinking into the soft snow, which had been frozen crust that morning, and keeping him from sliding. The rest followed. It was such a relief to be free of the rope and the danger that they took a new lease of life, and almost ran down the quarter mile to timber.

When they reached the poor hungry, thirsty, impatient horses, however, the sun had sunk behind the western mountains, and the hole of Hunt's Cove was already dusky.

"Don't change your boots. We can't ride down as quickly as we can lead the horses," the doctor commanded. "Saddle them quickly, and come on."

In the timber, too, the snow had softened, and the horses sank knee deep. Bennie soon discovered that a horse, which scrambles rapidly up a steep slope, goes very slowly down it, especially when the footing is soft snow and he doesn't know whether he is going to break through a long way or not. The doctor and Norman, more used to the ways of horses, and know-

ing how to manage them, were soon far ahead. Mr. Stone was somewhere in between. The three boys were before long so far in the rear that the leaders had vanished. Bennie and Spider could have gone a little faster than they did, but Dumplin' was about all in with weariness, and they stuck with him. By the time they reached bare ground at the head wall of Hunt's Cove, it was so dusky they could just make out the tracks. Below them, somewhere on the slope, they could hear the leaders crashing down through the fire scar.

"Come on," Bennie urged. "We got to hurry. Can't see the track at all on the bare ground. It's dark down in the cove already."

"I could hurry, but I can't make this darn horse go any faster. Nearly pulled my arm out dragging him," Spider answered.

The three of them started over the rim, tugging at the reluctant horses, who wanted to pick their way gingerly over the dead, fallen timber. The long spikes in their boots, which had been so necessary up on the snow, were a hindrance now. They kept catching in the dead sticks, and half turning the boys' ankles when they stepped on a hard piece of lava in the dark. Several times they tripped and fell, scratching themselves. Once Spider's horse slipped, knocking Spider over and bruising his leg. At the bottom, now, they heard the doctor calling to them.

"Coming as fast as we can!" Bennie yelled.

It was pitch black night at the bottom of the cove, in the heavy woods. They could just see the doctor

waiting for them. The minute they were down, he led the way, after Norman and Mr. Stone, who had kept on to camp. In the dark they couldn't see the swampy places, or the little brooks, and soon their boots, soaked all the afternoon by snow, were full of water, and they were wet almost to their waists. They came to the main stream at last, and mounted the horses, spikes or no spikes. The horses reared and balked, and had to be kicked and driven into the dark water, and nearly spilled their riders as they scrambled snorting out on the farther bank.

Nobody had said a word for ten minutes, but now, through the black forest ahead, they saw suddenly the red glow of a big fire, and Bennie emitted a whoop.

"Hello, fire!" he yelled.

"Hello, food!" yelled Dumplin'.

"Dumplin' has recovered," said the doctor.

The boys dropped off their horses at camp—literally dropped off. The rustler, who had stayed in camp, took the horses back to pasture, and the doctor and the three boys joined Norman and Mr. Stone in front of a huge camp fire, flopped wearily on the ground, and began to peel off their boots and stockings. They took off their trousers, also, and got dry clothes from their dunnage bags. Then, without even attempting to wash the grease paint off their faces, they flopped on the ground again beside the roaring fire, and let the cook bring them food.

"If anybody speaks to me before I've had a cup of coffee, I'll bite him," said Bennie. "I was never so tired and cross in my life."

"Nobody wants to speak to you," Dumplin' retorted. "Don't worry."

"And yet," said Uncle Billy, "if we'd really got to the top, we'd be so set up now that we wouldn't mind the weariness. It's like a crew race. You'll notice it's always the losing crew which collapses at the finish line."

"I'd like to try it again, from a base camp at timber line," Norman said. "That would give us two hours more of daylight at each end. We could do it easily with that."

"If anybody talks about climbing Jefferson again, he's in danger of his life," Bennie retorted.

"Well, well, Bennie has had enough exercise for once!" Mr. Stone smiled. "He must have had—he hasn't even spoken to poor Jeff."

"Oh, gee, I was so tired I forgot him!" Bennie cried, jumping up with sudden energy. "Where is he, cook? What you done with him?"

"Whined so I tied him up down the creek a bit," the cook answered. He, too, was cross, because he had to get supper so late.

Bennie grabbed a lantern, and went off into the woods, calling, "Jeff, Jeff!" Those in camp heard a far-off yelp of greeting, and a few minutes later Bennie returned, with Jeff at his heels, and lay down by the fire again with the dog's head snuggled up to him.

It was after ten o'clock when supper was finished. The six climbers took enough water from the stove to wash the worst of the grease paint from their faces, and without any further preparation for bed pulled

off their clothes, got into their pyjamas, crawled, stiff and lame and aching in every joint, with cracked and bleeding lips, and red, smarting eyes, into their sleeping bags, and almost before their heads touched the little air pillows were fast asleep.

Bennie had started to remark to Spider, as he got into bed, that real mountain climbing was the hardest work there was, but he forgot what he was going to say before he could open his mouth. And, if he had said it, nobody would have been awake enough to listen.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Summit is Conquered!

THE doctor and Mr. Stone let the boys sleep late the next morning. The sun was high when they finally arose, and tumbled out into the ice-cold water of the creek for a good scrub with soap. After the bath, and a hot breakfast, they all felt cheerful and fairly fit again. The aches of the night before had somehow vanished, though their lips were still cracked and their noses were peeling.

"By Jiminy," said Bennie, as he scraped the breakfast plates to feed Jeff, "I believe I'd like to climb the old mountain again, after all. I sure do hate to go away from here and admit it beat us."

"Me, too," said Spider.

"Well, I know when I'm licked," Dumplin' put in. "I guess if you'd been dizzy and if you'd slipped the way I did, you wouldn't be so keen to go back."

"You've got more weight to cart up than we have," Spider laughed.

"That's no joke, either," said the doctor. "Dumplin' needs a lot of training down before he tackles a climb like Jefferson. It isn't his fault he was dizzy, or that he got so tired. Some people are always dizzy at high altitudes, anyhow. I wouldn't let him try it again in his present shape. But if you other boys are game, and Stone is game, I'd like to tackle the mountain from a base camp where we tethered the horses. That

will keep us here two days longer, so we won't have time to get in to see Mount Hood close to. You'll have to decide whether you'd rather reach the top of Jefferson, or see Hood. Those in favor say 'Aye.'"

"Aye!"

"Aye!"

"Aye!"

"Aye!"

"The 'ayes' have it," the doctor laughed. "Well, Norman, we'll take up a tent and bedding right after lunch. We'll sleep at timber line tonight, and again tomorrow night. Have two horses sent up day after tomorrow morning, at daybreak, to get the stuff, and have the rest of the train packed and waiting at the head of the cove. We'll make our getaway over the head wall by seven or eight o'clock. I'm going to try to get out by the short trail, day after tomorrow, snow or no snow."

Everybody lay around all that morning, in the shade of the woods, resting. After lunch, the largest tent, some grub, the sleeping bags, and a few cooking utensils were packed on two horses, while the climbers toted their climbing boots (now dried and oiled again), and a change of clothes in their packs. Nothing else was taken except the necessary climbing equipment—not even cameras. Dumplin' went along to spend the night with them, and have supper ready for them when they got down the next evening. He was pretty blue at the idea of being left behind, and kept saying, "I bet I could do it this time, and not get dizzy." But his father and the doctor wouldn't say he could go.

They got the tent pitched as near timber line as they could find a level, dry spot, and spent the latter part of the afternoon gathering fuel and melting snow for water. The two horses, of course, had been taken back down the slope by the guide. The six of them were alone, in the chill silence at the edge of the eternal snows, with the mountain rising right above them, white and naked, to the glittering pinnacle. While supper was cooking, Bennie and Spider walked up a few hundred feet on the lower snow-field, glanced back at the tumbled wilderness of forest and mountain and cañon, stretching south to the white pyramids of the Three Sisters, and then looked long upward at the pinnacle, pink with sunset.

"Gosh!" Bennie exclaimed, "what a lot of wild country! Do you realize, Spider, that we haven't met a human being since we left Marion Lake?"

"You forget the chap in the aeroplane," Spider laughed. "Well, we came out here to see the wilderness, didn't we?"

"You bet we did! And tomorrow we're going to tackle old Jefferson again. You know, I feel just as if it was a kind of fight. I bet other mountaineers feel that way, too. That's why it's such fun."

"*Other* mountaineers is good," Spider replied. "You talk as if you were a Swiss Guide."

"Well, I feel as if I could be one, when we get through with this old ant-hill," Bennie laughed. "I bet that pinnacle is going to be a sockdologer!"

Spider's face was sober. "I'm kind of scared of it, I don't mind admitting. I don't blame poor old Dump

a bit for getting dizzy. I don't get dizzy, but when I think how easy it would be to slip, I kind of get hollow in the pit of my stomach."

Bennie was about to answer, when he heard a bark down the slope, and looking back saw Jeff bounding up the snow! The pup had broken loose back at the camp (or the cook had let him loose), and he had followed the tracks up here. He fell upon Bennie with yelps of joy.

"Well, that pup loves you, if nobody else does," Spider laughed. "Dumplin' will have to sit on him all day tomorrow."

With the setting of the sun, it grew very cold up here under the snow-fields. They all huddled around the fire to eat, and soon after supper took off nothing but their boots and crawled into bed with even their sweaters on. The six sleeping bags had been packed into the one tent, so there was no free floor space at all. The first man in couldn't get out without stepping on all the rest. Poor Jeff, driven outside, snuggled down against the tent on the lee side, out of the wind, and so the night was passed, none too comfortably by anybody.

They were up with the first daylight, built the fire, and cooked breakfast. Then Jeff was tied with a piece of the tent guy ropes, and Dumplin' came with them as far as the southwest shoulder, where they roped.

"Don't let Jeff get away and follow us!" was Bennie's parting word.

"He might use my alpenstock, and make it all

right," said Dumplin', trying to seem cheerful as he saw the rest leaving him. "I'll watch for you, and have hot supper ready," he added, waving his hand.

"Good old Dump!" Bennie said, as they moved out on the pumice. "Too bad he can't come along."

"He'll be all right in a year or two, after we get the fat off him, and get him hardened up. He's grown too fast," said Uncle Billy.

Whether it was because they were now more used to the trick, or because Dumplin' was not on the rope to hold them back, or because the steps had not entirely melted away since the day before yesterday, making the doctor's work easier, or because of all three reasons, they made faster time than before, and didn't need to rest so long or so often. But they had four rock chutes to cross instead of two. The one which had been started by the big lava chunk which nearly hit them was now four feet deep, and a fourth one had been ploughed, also. But nothing was coming down them yet, for they reached the traverse long before the sun's rays got in on that side. They were up on the northwest shoulder at 10:30, and at the base of the pinnacle at noon.

Once at the foot of that terrific incline, both the scouts felt suddenly weak in the knees.

"Like the looks of it?" the doctor asked.

"I do not!" Bennie answered. "I'd about as soon try to climb the outside of the Washington Monument. But if you say people have done it, I guess we can. It's a fight, and I ain't licked yet!"

The doctor let them rest before they tackled the pinnacle, and gave his orders. "I'll go ahead and cut the steps. You, Bennie, will anchor, and play me out the rope, and don't you come on a step till I tell you. Then Stone will play you out till you get to the platform I've made for you. Then Spider plays him out, then Norman plays Spider out. We won't have more than one of the five of us moving at any one time, in other words."

The doctor rose, and began to hack steps into the snow, in front of his face, on the precipitous incline. He had to cut them deep, to get a firm footing, and it was slow work. Before he was quite played out on his twenty feet of rope, he cut an extra large step, like a little platform, and then moved up a couple of steps, and told Bennie to climb to the platform. Bennie did so, while Mr. Stone played him out. Then Bennie anchored firmly on the platform, and let his uncle cut his way up fifteen or twenty feet farther. Bennie then stepped up two steps, and let Mr. Stone climb to the first platform. Once on it, Mr. Stone played Bennie up, till he was on a second little platform, just behind the doctor. Then the doctor moved ahead twenty feet higher, Bennie moved, Mr. Stone climbed to platform number two, and they all anchored hard, and waited till Spider reached platform number one. In this way, only one man ever climbing at a time, with the rest anchored, they crept slowly up the wall of icy snow. In two places, it was, in fact, not snow but actual ice, and the doctor had to hack out the steps and could not use his stock as he climbed. He

had to depend on the spikes in his boots entirely, because he carried no ice ax. Bennie, below him, watched with terror in his heart, and clung to his alpenstock with a rigid grip. If his uncle slipped, nothing would save him but that stock! If Bennie's grip gave way, they would both go, and maybe pull down all the rest! Here was a battle indeed, here was a fight with the mountain where every single step you took had to be just right, or you were gone! Bennie didn't dare look down. He kept his eyes fixed on his uncle's boot soles above him, and refused even to look off to right and left. He didn't dare.

They climbed steadily, and in silence, except for the orders to each man when he was to advance. Their faces were set and grim. Bennie felt the strain. He was getting tired rapidly, not from the physical effort, which wasn't really great except for the doctor, but from the mental effort, the incessant concentration on every step he took. At last, after an hour and a half, the doctor went over the top, and shouted back a loud "Hurrah!" Bennie followed him over, and one by one the rest came on, to fall at once down on the snow.

After a long moment, Bennie sat up and looked around him. At first he felt as if he were riding in an airship in the sky. The summit cap of snow was small, and on every side ended in a sharp edge—the edge of a precipice!

"Look at old Hood up there!" his uncle cried, pointing north. "Seems near enough to touch today, and it's fifty miles off."

"I don't want to look at it," Bennie answered. "I

don't want to look at anything. Gosh, I don't like this place!"

"I don't care for it much myself," Mr. Stone confessed. "You could roll over twice here, and commit suicide with the greatest ease."

"But we got here!" Spider exclaimed. "I'm glad we got here! We've beat the old mountain!"

"Now you're talking," said Uncle Billy. "You'll all like it better when we are down again. Well, come on, let's start then, if you don't care for my view."

They now reversed positions on the rope, Norman going first, and facing in against the cliff almost as you descend a ladder, crawled down as slowly as they had crawled up. But it was even more trying to Bennie, because he had to look down for each step, and he had to watch the man descending below him, when he was anchored, in order to brace extra firmly in case of a slip. He didn't get dizzy, but at every step he had to fight a kind of nausea, as if he was going to be sick, especially when he was obliged to lower himself over the two ice walls, with only his spikes to hold him, and the rope, played out by the man above. When they were all at the bottom again, he felt faint, and sat down on the snow a moment, to get back the strength in his legs.

"Well, boys," he heard his uncle say, "you've done what mighty few people do any one season. But we're not through yet. We've got to get home, you know."

Bennie got up quickly. "I'm all right," he said. "Lead the way!"

At half-past four o'clock they were back again at the point on the shoulder where they lunched two days before, and here they rested fifteen minutes, and ate the small portions of food they had brought. Nobody was really hungry, however, and soon they were starting down the drift where Dumplin' slipped. Out across the traverse they went, got over the chutes without accident, though twice they were barely over when great toboggans of ice came whizzing down, and at seven o'clock reached the southwest shoulder. Far below, at timber line, they saw Dumplin' building up the fire, and they saw, too, his tracks up here in the snow.

"He was up here watching us crossing the traverse," Bennie said. "He beat it down to cook supper. Good old Dump—wish he could have been with us."

Off came the rope now, and with wet boots and cracked faces and aching backs and smarting eyes, they half ran, half tumbled, down the last snow-field to the camp, and walked into the odor of boiling coffee and sizzling bacon, while Jeff, released from his tether, came yelping to meet them.

"I saw you on top!" Dumplin' said. "I spent half the day up on the shoulder. I couldn't see you climb the pinnacle, but I saw you on top. You didn't stay there long."

"Bennie didn't like it," his uncle laughed.

"I'll say I didn't!" Bennie cried. "Gee, Dump, I'm not fat like you, and I guess I'm in pretty good condition, but I kept feeling all the way up and down

that old pinnacle as if I was going to be dizzy the next minute."

"That's not a matter of condition with you—it's a matter of nerves," said his uncle.

"I felt so, too," Spider put in. "Whenever I looked down, and couldn't help thinking what would happen if I fell, then I got kind of sick inside. But when I was just thinking about my next step, I was all right."

"And nothing happened," the doctor added. "Climbing is safe enough if you know how to climb, if you are in good physical condition, and if you can control your nerves. But you can no more tackle a climb like this safely without a guide who knows the technique than you can fly an aeroplane without practice. The accidents happen either to people who try to climb without knowing the tricks, or to people who aren't in good shape for the hard work, or to people who can't keep their nerves under control and take each step slowly, carefully and firmly."

"What made me so tired at the top?" Bennie asked. "I was twice as tired then as I am now. Was it the altitude?"

"No," said his uncle. "Ten thousand five hundred feet wouldn't bother you a bit. It was because you are still a green climber and you were fighting your nerves all the way up the pinnacle. Nothing is such hard work as fighting your own nerves."

"Well, I'll tell the world my old nerves put up a good scrap, then!" Bennie laughed. "Anyhow, Spider and I aren't so green as we were three days ago.

I wish the Boy Scouts gave merit badges for mountain climbing. I bet we could get one."

"Why don't they give badges for that, I wonder?" Mr. Stone said.

The doctor shook his head. "Too dangerous," was his comment. "How many scout masters could you find who are really skilled mountain climbers? Think what would probably happen if a green climber tried to take a bunch of scouts up Jefferson. They'd all land down in the cañon. And rock climbing is just as dangerous."

"How would you get up the pinnacle if it was all ice, the way it was in a couple of places?" Spider asked. "I mean, so hard, you couldn't drive your stock in, and the man below you couldn't either?"

"You'd have to use ice axes," the doctor replied. "An ice ax has a long handle, and on the back of the blade is a long, sharp, slightly curved point, like a railroad spike. You cut your steps with the blade, and then you use this point, driven in above you, to anchor with. That's what they use in the Alps, where so much of the climbing is on glacier ice."

"Well, Spider, we'll have to go to Switzerland next, and climb some old glaciers," Bennie grinned.

"And a few spitzes," Spider answered.

It was bitter cold again that night, and soon after supper they all crawled into their sleeping bags. They were so weary, however, that even the cold could not keep them awake.

CHAPTER XXIV

Back Over the Divide—A Horse Turns Three Somersaults Down the Snow Slope

THE doctor, as usual, was first up. He rose at dawn, got the fire and the breakfast started, and then routed out the rest. The peak of Jefferson above them was hidden in mist, and Hunt's Cove below was filled with white cloud, also. In fact, they looked out over a billowing sea of white, with the sharp lava spires of Three Fingered Jack to the south, rising up like an island.

"Looks like a phantom ship," said Bennie.

They were scarcely through breakfast, when they heard horses coming up through the timber, and soon the guide appeared, leading a couple of pack animals to take the luggage down. An hour later they were once more in Hunt's Cove. The luggage was repacked, the boys unscrewed the spikes from their boots and mounted into the saddle again, and Norman led the way almost due south, following a trail up the head wall, instead of trying to get back as they had entered across Grizzly Flats.

"We can get back to the cars this afternoon this way—if we can cross at all," he said. "But I won't promise we can cross, doctor. A week ago you couldn't get up on the other side."

"Just the same, we'll try it," the doctor replied. "Bennie needs some exercise."

For the next few miles they traveled through woods and across open upland meadows, riding on deep snow. In the hot glare of the sun, they had to put on their glasses again, and repaint their faces. Their lips once more cracked open, and their noses were burnt a still brighter brick red. Then they came to the crest of the Divide, below the long south shoulder of Jefferson, and started down. They realized at once why Norman said it was impossible a week ago to climb up here. There was a drop of a couple of hundred feet where the trail was completely buried in a huge drift, which, Norman said, a week before had an overhang at the top, completely preventing any horse getting over. But this cornice had now melted and collapsed. They dismounted, grasped their horses by the bridles, and started down, taking the slope at an angle to lessen the pitch. The saddle horses got down well enough, but the pack horses, with the top-heavy loads on their backs, could not keep their footing so well, and half-way down one of them fell. He turned three complete somersaults as he pitched headlong. At first the load held, but at the second somersault the hitch slipped, and out burst the load, scattering and tobogganing in all directions—two rolled-up sleeping bags, a tent, alpenstocks, a dunnage bag, a coffee-pot, and what canned goods were still left in their provision supply.

The terrified animal landed in a small fir tree at the bottom, scrambled to his feet apparently unhurt—and



Crossing the Divide near Mount Jefferson on July 25th. Three Fingered Jack in Distance.

made a dash right back up the slope! His fall, his snorts, his sudden dash, threw a scare into the other horses. The saddle horses, of course, were being led, and couldn't get away, but the pack horses dashed after him.

"Quick!" shouted Norman, "give all the saddle horses' bridles to one man, and then head 'em off!"

Everybody led his horse quickly to the cook, who tied the bridles to a tree, and then the men and boys ran up the slope as fast as they could, some going to the right, some to the left, in order to surround and get ahead of the runaways, and drive them back.

It was hard work. The snow was deep and soft and wet, the slope very steep, and a frightened horse, with four legs, can climb faster than a man with two. Jeff didn't help any. He merely dashed wildly around, barking loudly, without sense to head the horses back.

"Call off that chickadee hound!" panted the doctor to Bennie.

The first horse, minus his load, actually got back to the top, and scrambled over, before he could be headed. Norman and Bennie followed him, sneaking on either side through the trees, for a quarter of a mile before he stopped abruptly at a spot where the snow was melted, and began to eat grass. Then they crept up on him, got hold of his rope bridle, and led him back.

By the time the train was rounded up again, everybody was reeking wet with perspiration from their knees up, and soaking wet with snow water from their knees down.

"My head is burning, and my feet freezing, and oh, boy, for a drink!" Bennie exclaimed.

The scattered luggage was collected, the horse repacked, and they moved on. In less than a mile of rapidly dropping trail the snow ceased entirely. The trail grew dry and dusty. The yellow pines began to appear again, and they came to a little lake at the head of a cañon—and everybody, horses and men and boys, drank and drank and drank.

After that there was no more snow, and before long the trail was in a forest of yellow pines, and wide as a country road, and all except the rustler and the cook, who had to look after the pack horses, broke into a trot.

In a couple of hours they reached a fine, clear, racing brook, and a Forest Service camp ground. Across the brook was a real road. The doctor and Mr. Stone trotted on three or four miles to get the cars, while the rest waited for the pack horses, and when they arrived got the packs off and sorted.

When the cars came back, the baggage was transferred to them, the boys said good-bye to Norman, Bennie made the cook shake hands with Jeff, and sinking back into the cushions of the motor cars, the boys sighed with the sudden sense of luxury.

"Beats the saddle of an old cayuse, when you're tired," Dumplin' called from his father's car.

"Just the same, I'm awful sorry it's all over," said Bennie. "I never have worked so hard in all my life—and I never had such a wonderful time."

"Me, too," said Spider.

"You've got a good time coming, and in about one hour, or less," said Uncle Billy. "I don't know whether you've noticed that lunch was pretty sketchy today."

"Sketchy is the word," Bennie answered. "Gee, it's three o'clock, and we haven't had a thing since five A. M."

"You wait," laughed the doctor. "I've got a surprise for you."

In a short time he stopped the car at a ranch house beside the great springs of the Metolius River, which gush right up out of the open ground of a green meadow in the heart of the forest, irrigating the whole meadow and making a rich oasis of grass and crops in the arid soil.

"Dinner ready?" he called to a woman on the porch.

"All ready," she answered.

"How did you order dinner here?" demanded Bennie.

"Radio," the doctor grinned.

"He telephoned from the Ranger Station when he went for the car, you poor fish," Spider said.

The two men and three boys washed up and went into the dining-room. There, on a table with a real cloth, was a huge dinner—steak, fried potatoes, green vegetables, hot biscuit, berries. They ate and ate, and when the food was gone the woman of the house reappeared bearing a huge lemon pie, with browned meringue three-quarters of an inch thick, all covered with little golden drops like honey.

"Wow!" yelled Dumplin'. "Lemon pie!"

"Oh," sighed Bennie, "why did I eat so much steak!"

"I'll take Bennie's piece, then," said Mr. Stone.

"I'd like to see you try!" Bennie answered.

When the pie was gone, everybody sat back and sighed with content.

"That pie was almost as wonderful as Mount Jefferson," Bennie declared.

"And it didn't make me dizzy," said Dumplin'.

"It's the kind Mother made," said Mr. Stone.

"Gosh, I wish *my* mother could!" Spider exclaimed.

"It was a good pie," said the doctor, "but don't forget you've lived on camp fare for a week. It would have seemed pretty good if it hadn't been as good as it was."

"Don't try to run that pie down, Billy," Mr. Stone declared. "I will defend that pie with my last breath."

"All I can say is this ——" Bennie began impressively.

"Yes?" the rest prompted.

"I am satisfied with Oregon," he finished.

"It's the lemon pie!" laughed Dumplin'.

They rolled into Bend at nine that evening, Jeff was left to sleep in the car at the garage, and for the next hour there was a grand splashing in bathtubs, a washing of clothes, a shaving by the two men, who hadn't shaved for a week, a patching of burnt noses and cracked lips with salve, and a general clean-up and overhauling.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Bennie, "it's almost over! I wish we hadn't been able to get over the Divide to-day, so's we'd been forced to go back over Grizzly Flats. That would have kept us out three days more. I don't want to sleep in an old bed, with sheets!"

"I guess it won't keep you awake," laughed Spider. "If it does, I'll set up the sodas tomorrow."

But he didn't have to.

CHAPTER XXV

Bennie Loses Jeff, but Brings Home Something Else to Last Him Many Years

THE doctor routed everybody out at five the next morning.

"It's the last time, boys," he said. "But we've got to get an early start today. I must make The Dalles tonight, and Portland tomorrow night. My vacation is over then."

"Don't go back on *my* account," said Bennie. "I'll stick around the mountains another week or two with you, if you really want me to."

"Yes, and I'll stick, too," Spider laughed.

"I wish we could," Uncle Billy answered. "But while we're getting hard and healthy, a lot of folks up in Portland are getting sick, so you see I have to be back. Hustle along, boys. No time to lose!"

It was so early that they had to get breakfast at an all-night lunch room, where Bennie bought some meat scraps for Jeff, who was still on the job. He had slept in the car that night.

"Good gracious, are you really going to take that mutt back with you?" his uncle demanded. "All the way East?"

"You've said it. Why, I bet he'd follow the train, if I didn't take him. He appreciates me at my true

value, this blooded collie does, don't you, Jeff, old thing?"

Jeff responded by leaping up and licking his face.

They were off at six, and rode all day northward through the "desert" country, sometimes down in the bottom of bare, desolate looking cañons, sometimes up on the plateau where nothing but endless miles of sage brush lay between them and the Cascades. In the morning Jefferson was the nearest mountain, and they could see the whole eastern face, snow-white and precipitous, with the summit pinnacle looking from this distance like a tiny little white button on top. Later they had to descend by a long, winding road cut out of the bank, without any guard rails, into the Deschutes Cañon, across the river on a bridge, and climb out on the other side. As afternoon came on, Jefferson dropped behind them, and Mount Hood grew nearer, 11,225 feet of snow, shaped like an almost perfect pyramid.

Again they descended into a cañon, and climbed out of it for six miles by a road so steep that they had to keep in low speed all the way, so narrow Bennie prayed they wouldn't meet anybody, and without any sign of a guard rail, or fence, or wall, to keep a car from skidding off into the hole below.

"Say, if I drove a car out here much, I'd have nervous prostration," Spider said, as Uncle Billy crawled past a descending Ford, with his right wheels about eight inches from the rim of the cañon.

"And if I had to drive down Fifth Avenue, I'd probably have it," the doctor laughed.

The sun was setting as they finally came into a region of orchards and endless grain fields, hit a good road, and whizzed rapidly down hill, steeper and steeper, into the gorge of the Columbia River, and ran right into a thriving, lively town called The Dalles.

While the cars were being looked after in a garage, Bennie went to a butcher's shop to get some more food for Jeff, fed him, and put him up in the car again, for the night. Then they all went to the hotel, registered, got the dust off their faces and clothes, and went in to dinner.

The next morning Jeff was not in the car. The garage man said he stayed there a while the night before, and then, when nobody was looking, evidently jumped out and ran away.

"Oh, gee, he was looking for me!" Bennie cried. "I ought to have tied him. Poor old Jeff, he's just hunting for me, all over this town!"

"Too bad," said Uncle Billy. "But he'll find a home somewhere—he seems to make friends easily, and your mother'll be awful glad."

"Well, I got to find him. Please drive around town while I look for him!"

"But I have to be back in Portland, Bennie. I've got to be at the hospital tomorrow morning."

"Aw, just ten minutes! Please!"

"Well, we'll take a look. Get in."

They started slowly down a residential street, Bennie hanging out of the car and whistling. One block, two blocks, three blocks they went, turned a corner, and began on another street.

Suddenly Spider gave a yell. "Hi, Bennie, there's your pup!"

The doctor stopped. Sure enough, in a yard beside a small house, playing with a boy of ten, was Jeff!

Bennie jumped out, ran to the gate, and whistled.

Jeff cocked his ears, looked toward Bennie, wagged his tail, took three jumps toward the fence—and then turned around and went back to the small boy!

"Sure, Bennie, that dog would follow your train all the way to Chicago," laughed Spider.

"He appreciates you at your true worth," called Uncle Billy.

"Just the same, he's my dog, and I'm going to have him!" Bennie said, angrily, laying his hand on the gate.

"Hold on," said his uncle. "Is he your dog? Where did you get him? Seems to me *he* has most to say about whose dog he is. He chose you, so's he could get a trip to the mountains, and now you've quit camping, he's chosen this kid."

"Well, he chose me first."

"Come here, son," the doctor called to the small boy, who came to the gate, Jeff at his heels. "Where did you get this dog?"

"He followed me home from the store last night," said the boy. "He's a fine dog. Is he yours?"

"He's mine," said Bennie, sternly. "Come here, Jeff!"

At the sound of his angry voice, Jeff got behind the small boy's legs.

"I didn't do nothin' to make him follow me," the

little fellow said. "Honest, I didn't. He just came. Ma said I could keep him. I—I never had a dog."

He was almost in tears, both because he thought he was being accused of stealing Jeff, and because he feared they were going to take his new pet away.

"Have a heart, Bennie," Spider said. "He wants the pup worse than you do."

Bennie hesitated, but his fondness for Jeff was too much. "No, sir, he's my dog," he declared.

"Let Jeff decide it," said Uncle Billy. "He doesn't really belong to either one of you. That's fair, isn't it?"

"Yes, I guess so," Bennie confessed.

"Now, you go ten feet up the sidewalk. Son, you walk down as far as that tree. Spider, hold Jeff till they are set. Now, both of you, call him!"

"Here, Jeff! Here, Jeff!" called Bennie.

"Come here, Buster, Buster!" called the little boy.

Spider released Jeff as they called—and the pup jumped up and licked Spider's face!

"Gee whiz, he's *my* dog!" Spider shouted, while the doctor sat in the car and roared with laughter.

"Try again," he said, after a second.

The two boys called once more, and Jeff, without hesitating longer, sprang to the little fellow, nearly knocking him down.

"All right, you keep him," Bennie declared. "He's a fool pup. I won't guarantee he'll not run away from you tomorrow."

"I bet he *won't!*" the little chap declared, throwing his arms around Jeff's neck.

Bennie didn't look back.

"Yes," Uncle Billy mused, "Jeff certainly regarded you at your true worth, Bennie. He was certainly a one-man dog, too, true to his master till death."

"Aw, quit it," Bennie pleaded. "I always really knew he was a mutt, but I—I was kind o' fond of him, just the same."

"Never mind," said Spider, "you've done your good turn for today. You've given him to that kid."

"Yes, I have!" said the honest Bennie. "He did the good turn, I'll say. He gave *himself* to the kid. A lot I had to do with it!"

They picked up the Stone car at the garage again, and set off at last for Portland, down the Columbia Highway, which is one of the finest motor roads in the world. It is laid out beside the great green river, sometimes down on the bank, beside the railroad, sometimes climbing up a thousand feet to the top of the cliffs, sometimes cut out of the sides of the cliffs, sometimes having to go right through a headland of lava by a tunnel. All the way through the Columbia gorge, from The Dalles nearly to Portland, the car rolled along the wide macadam highway, with the green river on one side, and the towering cliffs and waterfalls on the other, or else climbed up and down these cliffs by cleverly engineered grades.

The highest waterfall they passed was Multnomah, which dropped hundreds and hundreds of feet over the cliff, almost on the very road. And near it were sev-

eral superb basaltic lava pinnacles, towering 2,000 feet above the car.

"Oh, Uncle Billy, haven't we time to stop and have a try at that one?" Bennie cried, pointing to a great dome-like pinnacle which jutted out from the cliff like the tower at the front of a church.

"That's St. Peter's Dome," his uncle said. "We wouldn't have time to climb that if we had a year. Nobody has ever succeeded in getting up it."

"Why not?"

"Because a couple of hundred feet or so below the top, it is not only perpendicular all around, but the wall overhangs a shade. Nobody can climb an overhung precipice. I suppose we could carry up a coast guard mortar, and shoot a rope over the top, and then hoist you up in a breeches buoy, maybe. But I'm afraid there won't be time to do that today."

"You folks out here have it pretty soft, I'll say," Bennie commented.

"How's that?"

"Why, all you have to do is get in a car and drive out a few miles on a macadam road, and there you are right at the foot of rock climbs so hard nobody has ever climbed 'em! Out East, we either have to sail to Europe and tackle the—the Spitzes, or else ride 3,000 miles across the U. S. A. when we want a climb. I'm going to get a job in Oregon when I get through school."

"So you're satisfied with Oregon?" his uncle laughed.

"I'll tell the world I am!" Bennie answered.



Saint Peter's Dome and Columbia River. Mount Adams in Far Distance.

They rolled into Portland in time for dinner, which they all ate at Dumplin's house. The next day the scouts spent in packing their trunks, and seeing the city with Dumplin' for a guide. They took the evening limited for home. The doctor took them to the depot, and Mr. Stone and Dumplin' came down to see them off. The depot was full of men and women, in khaki clothes, with packs and alpenstocks. They were members of the Mazamas, going to take another train to get them to Diamond Peak, for a week's climbing.

"If one of them spoke a kind word to me, I'd swap my ticket East in three and four-fifths seconds, and go with 'em," Bennie declared. "I don't want to go home, Uncle Billy."

"Don't you want to see your father and mother?" the doctor asked.

"And get your little old Algebra out and nicely dusted?" added Dumplin'.

"'Course I want to see the folks, but I don't want to leave these old mountains," Bennie answered. "I guess Spider and I will never forget old Jefferson. And say, Mr. Stone, don't you forget you're going to send us the movie films when they're printed. We'll have 'em at the Town Hall, for the benefit of the Boy Scouts."

"I won't forget. And don't you forget you're coming back some day."

"A swell chance of forgetting that!" laughed Bennie. "And don't forget, Dump, that you're coming East to college, with Spider and me."

The train was made up now. The boys shook hands,

and shouted a dozen more messages of farewell as they went through the gates and climbed aboard.

It was dark when the train got up into the Columbia gorge. They saw no more of the Cascade Mountains. The next ones they saw were the Rockies. There was little snow left now, in mid-August, on the Rockies.

"Give me the old Cascades," said Bennie.

"Just the same, I'd like to stop off a few days and climb the Rockies, and see Glacier Park, and Yellowstone Park, and the Grand Canyon, and ——"

"Did you say a few days?" Bennie laughed. "Spider, you and I have got to get busy the next few years, and make a bunch of money, so's we can really see America."

"We've done pretty well for one summer, at that," Spider answered. "And I'll tell you one thing, it's up to us to do something to pay for it. I've got a scheme, too."

As they traveled homeward, Spider developed his scheme. It was to raise some money for the scouts by showing Mr. Stone's movies, and with the money have a lot of signs made, to mark trails with. Then Spider and Bennie and the scout master, maybe, would lead the scouts in opening up footpaths for trampers over the highest hills and cliffs around Southmead. Some of these trails used to exist, but they had long since grown over, and the summer boarders were always getting lost trying to find them. But many of the wildest places, the spots where there were the best views, had no trails at all.

"We'll make trails," Spider declared.

"Yes, and we'll build some shelter lean-tos where we can go and spend the night," Bennie offered.

"Sure, and we'll make some easy trails, and some hard ones, with cliff climbs in 'em."

"Sure, and put warning signs on the bad ones—'Dangerous—only for experienced climbers.'"

"Like us," Spider laughed. "Seriously, though, I bet we can do a lot to help the scouts and the town, and everybody, and have a lot of fun, and you and I can survey and map out the trails first, and get our merit badges in hiking that way, at the same time!"

"Great!" cried Bennie.

They continued to lay their plans all the way home, but they forgot them for a day or two in the excitement of greetings, and seeing their parents, and the old town, and all their fellow scouts. Bennie spent half his time for the next few days trying to cut up wood and weed the drive, while half a dozen boys stood around, making him tell them about Crater Lake, and the climb up Llao Rock, and how Dumplin' fell on Jefferson.

But after the first week was over, and they had settled back into the life of Southmead, Spider and Bennie got together with Mr. Rogers, the scout master, and outlined their trail plans. He was enthusiastic about them, and they set to work at once, with the help of his suggestions. They went out every afternoon till school opened, hiking through the woods and up the small 2,000-foot mountains around Southmead, surveying practical routes for paths, and making sketch maps. After school opened, they had to aban-

don the daily trips, but got in long ones on Saturdays. By October they had enough work planned out to keep the scout troop busy for months, and the task of opening the trails with scout axes, brush hooks, and pruning shears began.

The first trail opened was an old, steep path, long since overgrown by laurel and other bushes and small trees, up the mountain to the top of the cliffs the boys had climbed the previous winter. It took them five Saturdays, working with a gang of ten scouts, to get this trail, two miles long, cleaned out. By that time, Mr. Stone's pictures had come, and the scouts made twenty-five dollars by exhibiting them at the Town Hall, so that everybody could see what the Oregon mountains were like. Mr. Rogers kept the money, and the first use made of it was to have three or four white signs made, to mark the newly-cut trail. Every sign carried, in black letters, the name of the trail—"Cliff Path to Monument Mountain," and, below, the name of the organization erecting it—"Southmead Boy Scouts."

As soon as these signs were ready, the troop took them out and put them at the proper places—at each end, and at the points where old wood roads crossed, to make confusion.

During the winter, Spider and Bennie hiked on snowshoes many miles, over all the surrounding hills, trail planning, and visited the scouts in the next town, planning with them a foot-trail over the long, rocky ridge of wooded hills between the two villages. When spring came, this work, too, was started, the two troops

working from their respective ends. They finally met at the town boundary, erected a shelter there, and had a big camp fire and celebration.

By the end of the summer, Bennie and Spider saw real results—not so many as they had planned, but yet enough to cause the local Board of Trade to get out a little trail map for summer visitors, which Spider was asked to draw, and to cause the summer visitors to hike in larger numbers than ever before. And wherever they hiked, on the new trails, they saw the neat signs to guide them, posted by the Boy Scouts.

"It's fine work, boys," said Mr. Rogers, after the two scouts had passed their examinations for merit badges in hiking. "We've got a long trail to the next town, we've got one up Monument, we've cleaned the old path to Eagle Rock, and we've built one to the Cave. If we keep these cleared out, and add one new one a year, we'll soon have Southmead the best town for tramping in the United States!"

"Just the same," said Bennie, a little wistfully, "I wish I was going to climb old Jefferson tomorrow, where there isn't any trail at all!"

"If you hadn't climbed him, though, you wouldn't have been so keen for this work we've been doing," Spider said. "It's because we got into the real wilderness that made us want to help folks around here to get out and hike."

"Right—as usual," Bennie laughed. "I'm not kicking. It's great stuff, making trails. I like it. But some day!—Oh, you Crater Lake, I'm going back to you!"

"We might get in shape for it by taking a crack at the Monument cliffs tomorrow," Spider laughed. "We haven't climbed them since spring."

"You're on," said Bennie. "Let's carry packs and blanket rolls, and hike on down the other side, and spend the night at Wilson Pond."

"That's only fourteen miles—I'm your man," cried Spider.

"'Course, it isn't much, but it'll keep us in condition," Bennie declared, with great pretended airiness of manner. "We'll hike back home in time for breakfast."

Mrs. Rogers, who overheard this conversation, came out on the porch when the boys had gone.

"Bennie's a great joker," she laughed.

"He is—and he isn't," the scout master answered. "As a matter of fact, it *is* fourteen miles to Wilson Pond, over the mountain, and as a matter of fact, those two boys *will* get up tomorrow at four, have a swim, and be home for breakfast at half-past seven or eight."

"Now you're the joker," his wife laughed.

"You take a climb with them once, and see how much of a joke it is," said he.

THE END